



# CENSORED MEDIA MEXICO, 2011

**FUNDACIÓN MEPI**



## WHY THE INVESTIGATION?

In the last six years, the Mexican media has come under sharp attack by organized crime. Forty-one journalists were killed between 2007 and 2012, coinciding with a government crackdown against drug cartels. Most of them were murdered because of their reporting on crime, according to the Austria-based International Press Institute (IPI). The trend made Mexico the most dangerous country for the media last year.

In 2010, the Fundación MEPI began monitoring self-censorship in local media. That first study was able to quantify black news holes throughout Mexico, places where media outlets had stopped reporting on most crime related to drug cartels.

MEPI decided to launch a follow-up to the initial investigation. We monitored 14 out of 31 states in Mexico, covering 14 daily newspapers during 2011.



## THE RESULTS

Fear of retaliation by organized crime continued to influence news outlets' decision on what to publish.

Regional coverage of organized crime rose 100 percent compared to the year prior. News outlets reported 7 out of every 10 incidents about organized crime.

More reporting did not improve the quality of coverage. Eighty percent of the monitored dailies failed to add clear context to their reporting.

MEPI found federal and local government agencies failed to provide the regional media with timely and accurate information about crime and security.

MEPI also identified a troubling pattern in several states largely controlled by a single cartel. In those regions, anti-crime coverage often outweighed reports on criminal incidents. In contested territories, the opposite was true, likely because organized crime did not have the same stronghold on media in those parts.



## METHODOLOGY

We chose 14 online dailies with accessible archives.\*

We reviewed their crime stories during the year 2011.

The articles were divided into two groups: stories that mentioned organized crime and those that did not.

The content of each story was reviewed to determine state public safety trends and the hegemony of cartels. Factors considered were the use of official sources, narco language and how well the outlet explained the violence.

Story content was also divided into two other categories: government anti-crime actions and organized crime activity. This review helped us understand how the news outlet portrayed drug-related violence to its readers.

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\* In three states we only monitored six months of 2011 because of accessibility problems with the archives.



## Government Anti-Crime Actions Tracked

**Arrests  
Police Operations  
Official Reports  
Seizures, Raids**



## Organized Crime Activity Tracked

- Executions
- Extortions/Kidnappings
- Attacks on Government Offices/  
Personnel
- Attacks on Police
- Threats to Schools
- Arson
- Home Invasions
- Shootouts, Heists and Armed  
Robberies
- Narco Paraphernalia
- Mass Graves
- Jail Breaks and Riots
- Attacks on Businesses
- Cartel-linked Female Killings
- Bombs, Grenades and MPG  
Attacks
- Cartel-related Corruption
- Road Blocks Known As Narco  
Blocks
- Attacks on Public Transport
- Attacks on Migrants
- Attacks on Drug Rehab Clinics
- Attacks Against Media
- Body Snatching
- Prostitution Tied to Cartels
- Messages in Banners, Graffiti



**MEDIA MONITORED  
( 2011)**

STATE	MEDIA	CRIME GROUPS NAMED IN NEWS STORIES
Coahuila	El Siglo de Torreón	Sinaloa Cartel/Zetas
Nuevo León	El Norte	Gulf Cartel/Zetas
Ciudad Juárez	Norte	Juarez Cartel and Sinaloa Cartel
Zacatecas	Imagen Zacatecas	Not named
Durango	El Siglo de Durango	Not named
Guadalajara	El Informador	La Resistencia, Zetas, La Familia Michoacana, Milenio Cartel, Jalisco Nueva Generación Cartel



Sonora	El Imparcial	Arellano Felix, Sinaloa Cartel
Tamaulipas	El Mañana	Zetas
Veracruz	La Jornada Veracruz	Zetas and La Familia
Morelia	La Voz de Michoacán	Not Named
Morelos	El Diario de Morelos	Cartel Pacifico Sur, Gulf Cartel, Beltran Leyva Cartel, Sinaloa Cartel, La Familia, Zetas
Aguascalientes	El Sol de Aguascalientes	Zetas, Gulf Cartel and Beltran Leyva Cartel
Hidalgo	El Sol de Hidalgo	Zetas
Sinaloa	El Noroeste	Sinaloa Cartel

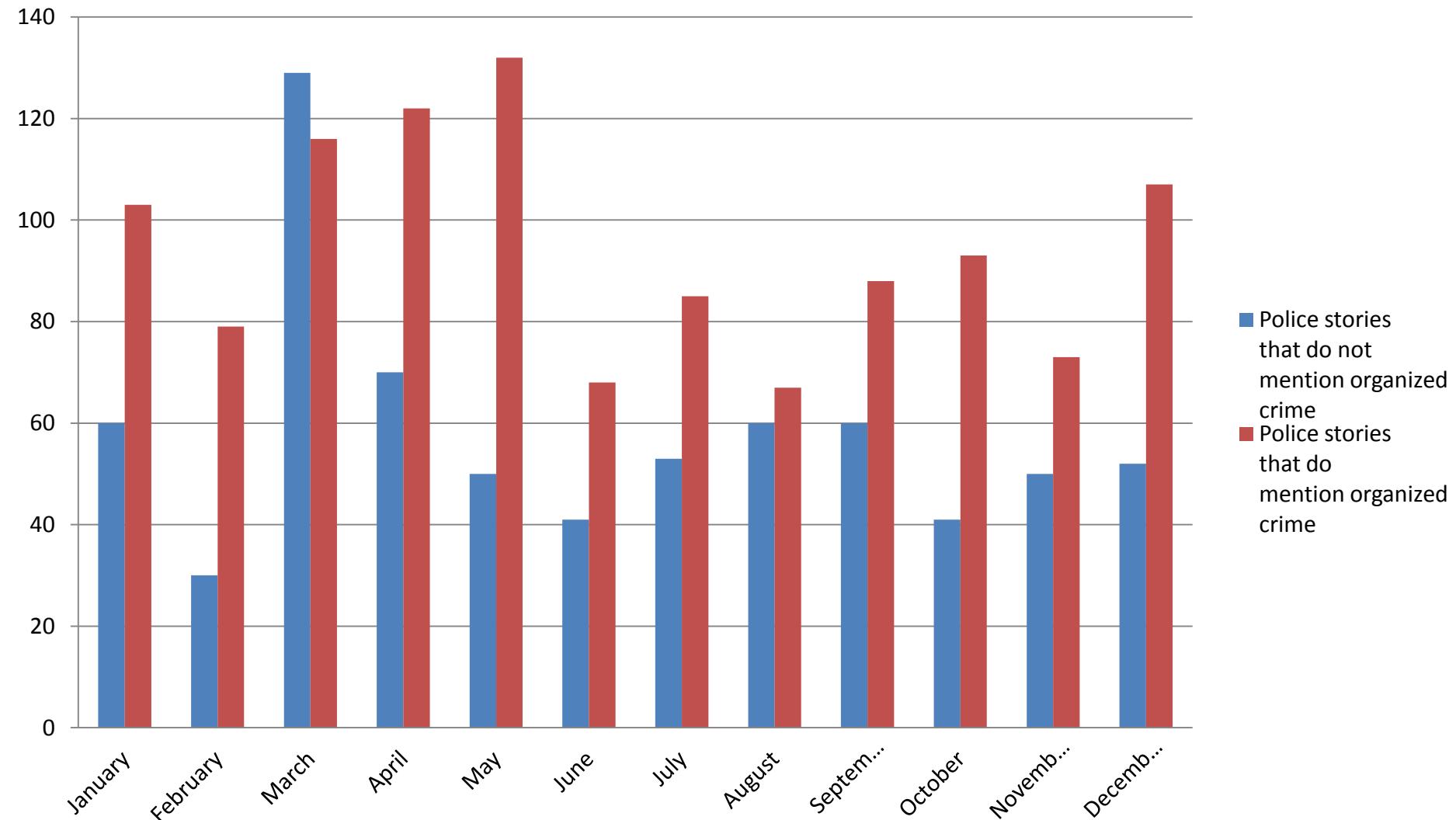


# TORREÓN, COAHUILA

*El Siglo de Torreón*

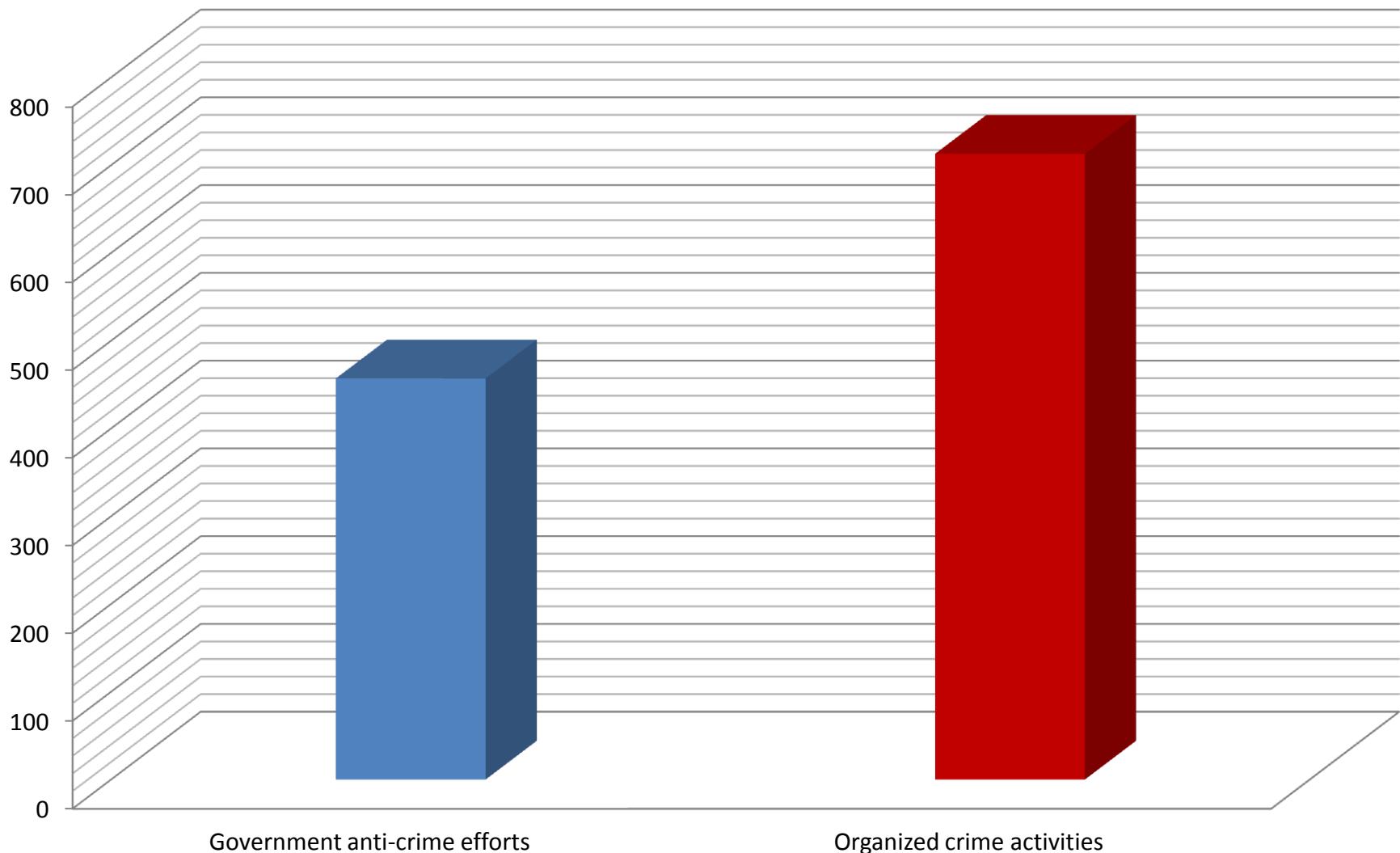


## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS EL SIGLO DE TORREÓN





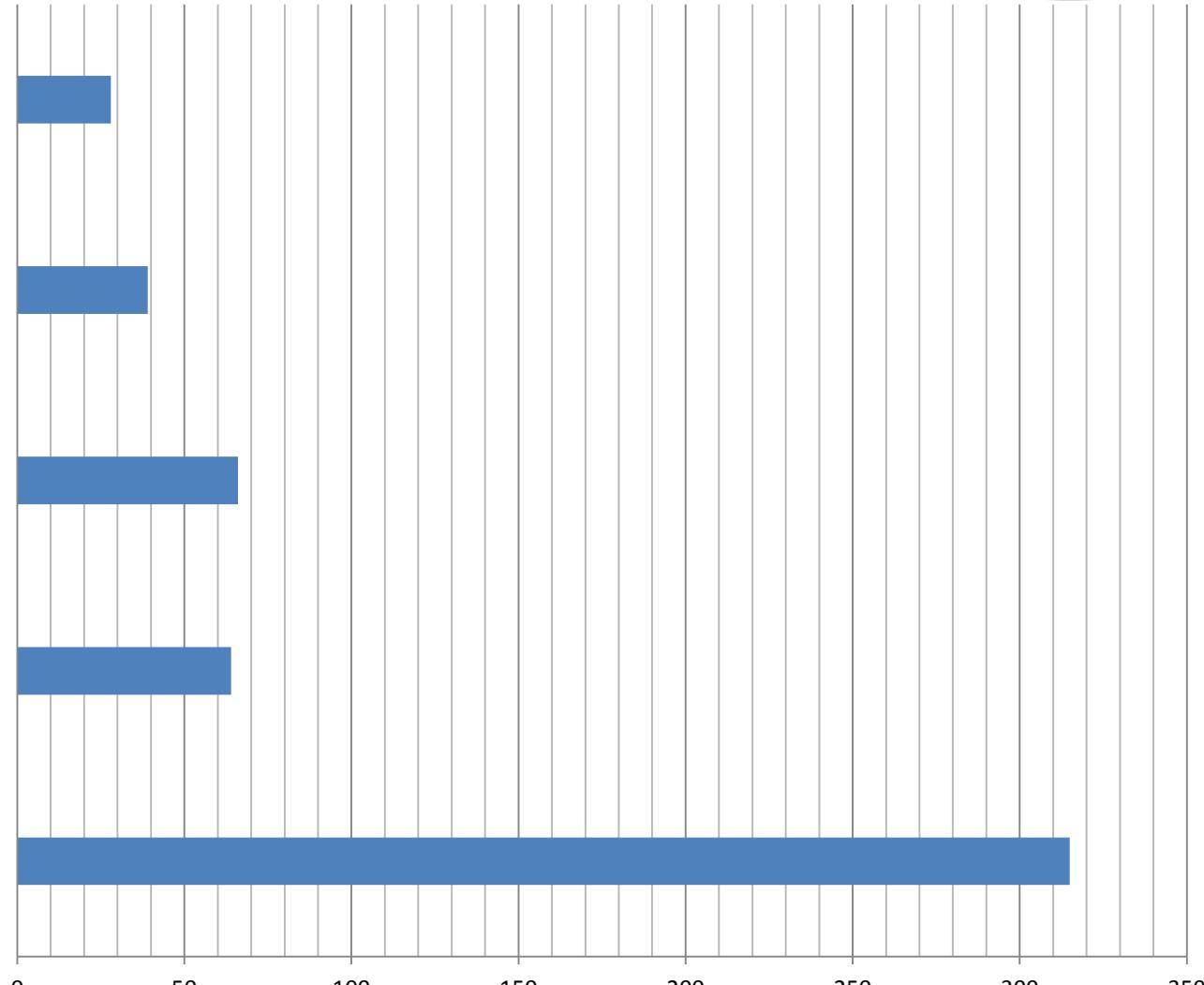
## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS





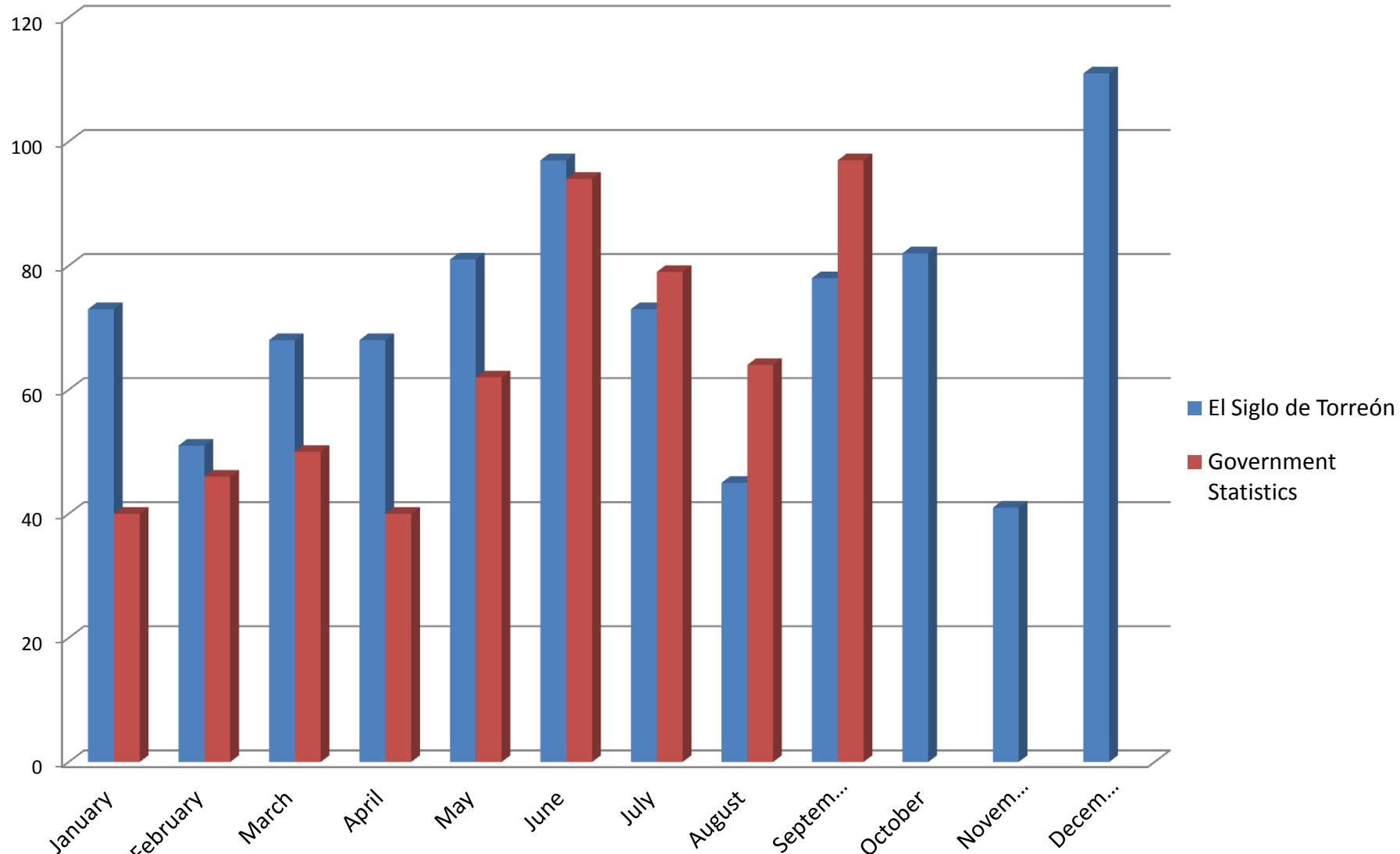
## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS

Wrapped in blankets/With a bag over  
the head



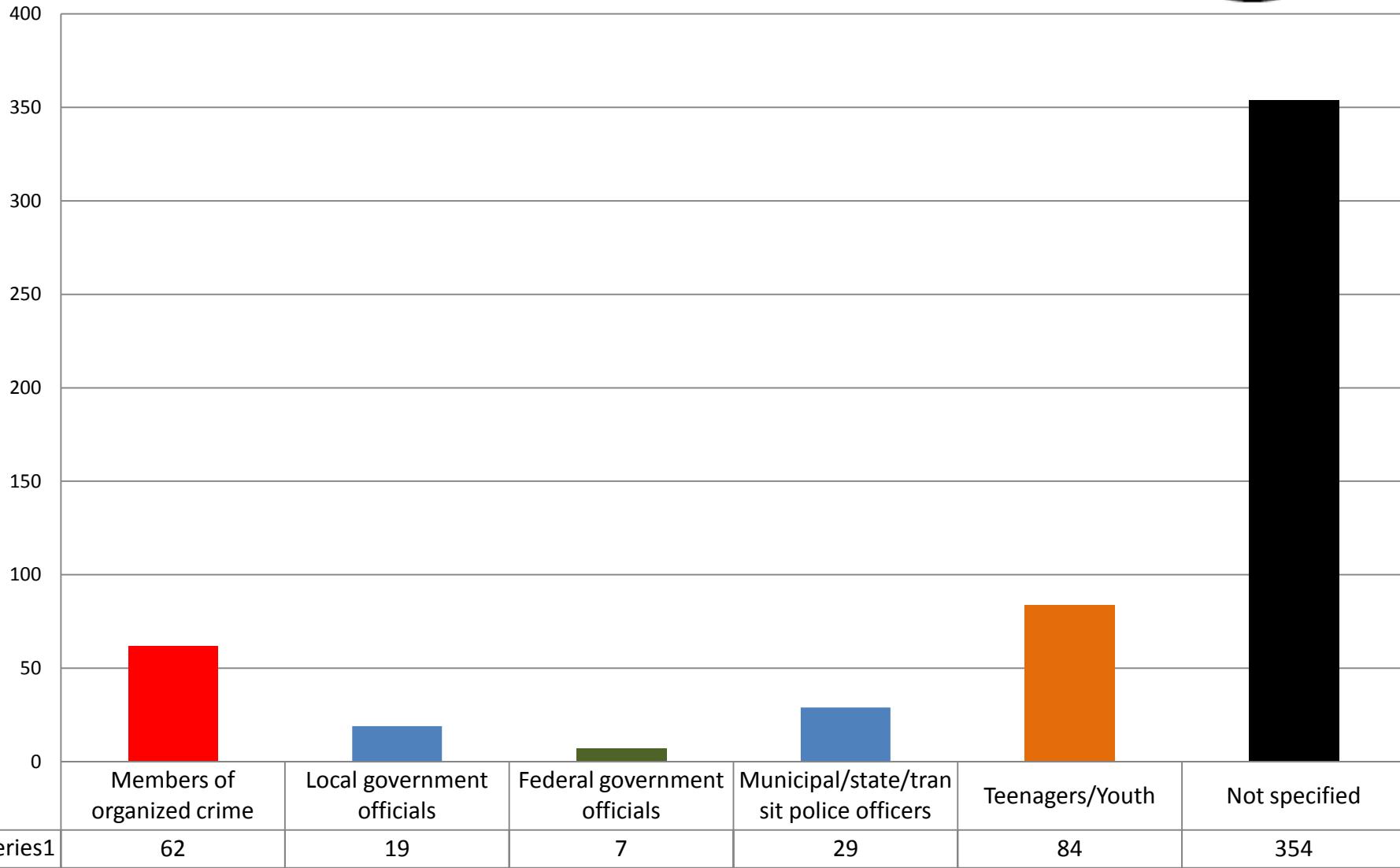


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- Torreón is caught in the crossfire between two cartels battling for hegemony— the Zetas and Sinaloa Cartel.
- There were a greater number of reports on activities by organized crime than government actions.
- *El Siglo de Torreón* cited official sources when reporting on organized crime murders. When information is available, the daily publishes victims' names and other descriptive characteristics that may help in the official identification of the bodies.
- Torreón is a vibrant industrial center and the business sector has been greatly affected by organized crime.
- Changes in daily life:
  - Physicians did not make house calls.
  - Schools taught children, as young as 6 years of age, how to protect themselves during shootings.



## Cartel Attacks on *EL SIGLO DE TORREÓN*

\***November 2011.** Three armed individuals attacked the newspaper's subscription offices, setting fire to a car parked near the entrance. The assailants sprayed the front façade with bullets from AK-47 rifles.





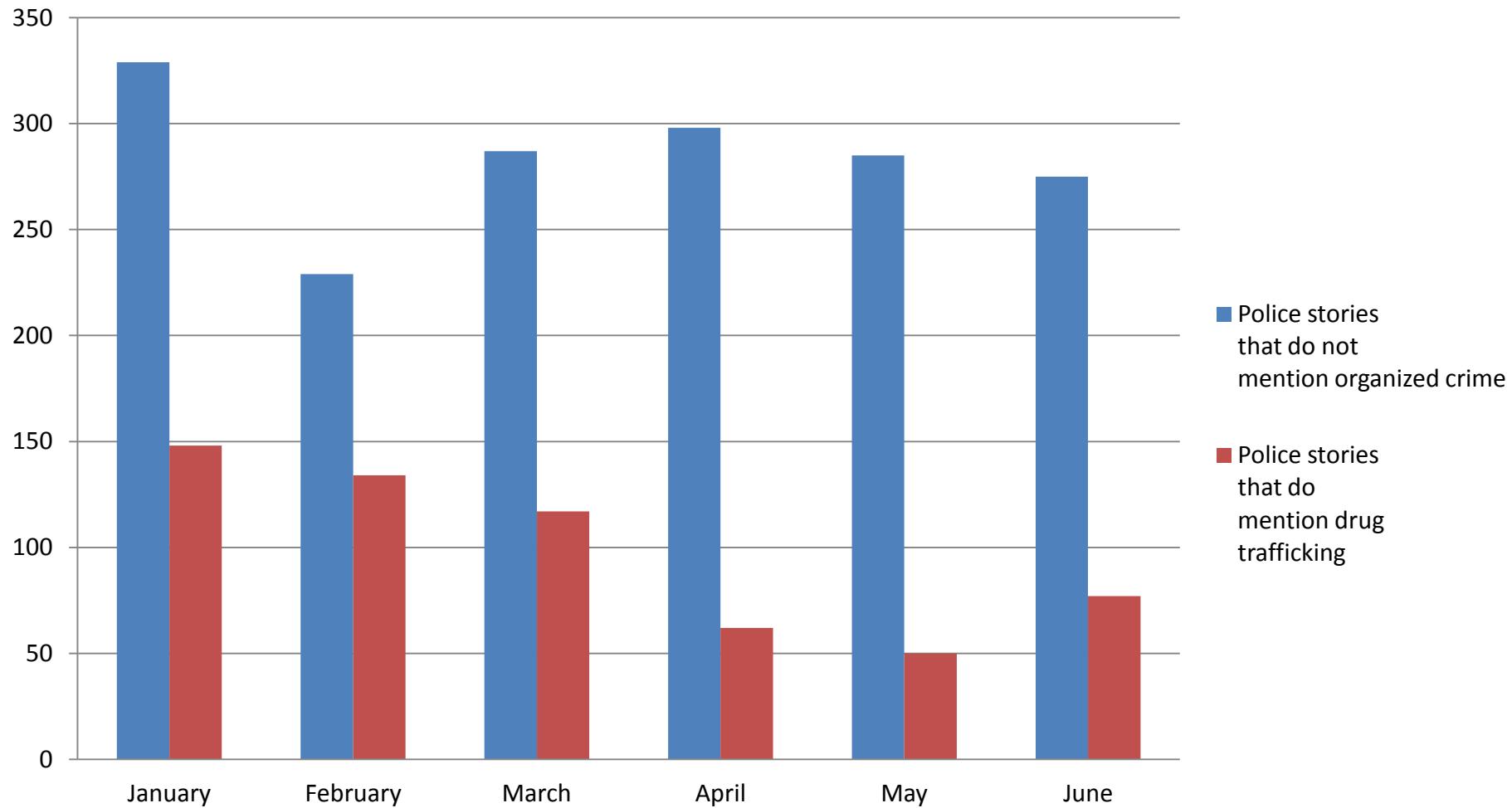
# CIUDAD JUÁREZ, CHIHUAHUA

*Norte*



## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS

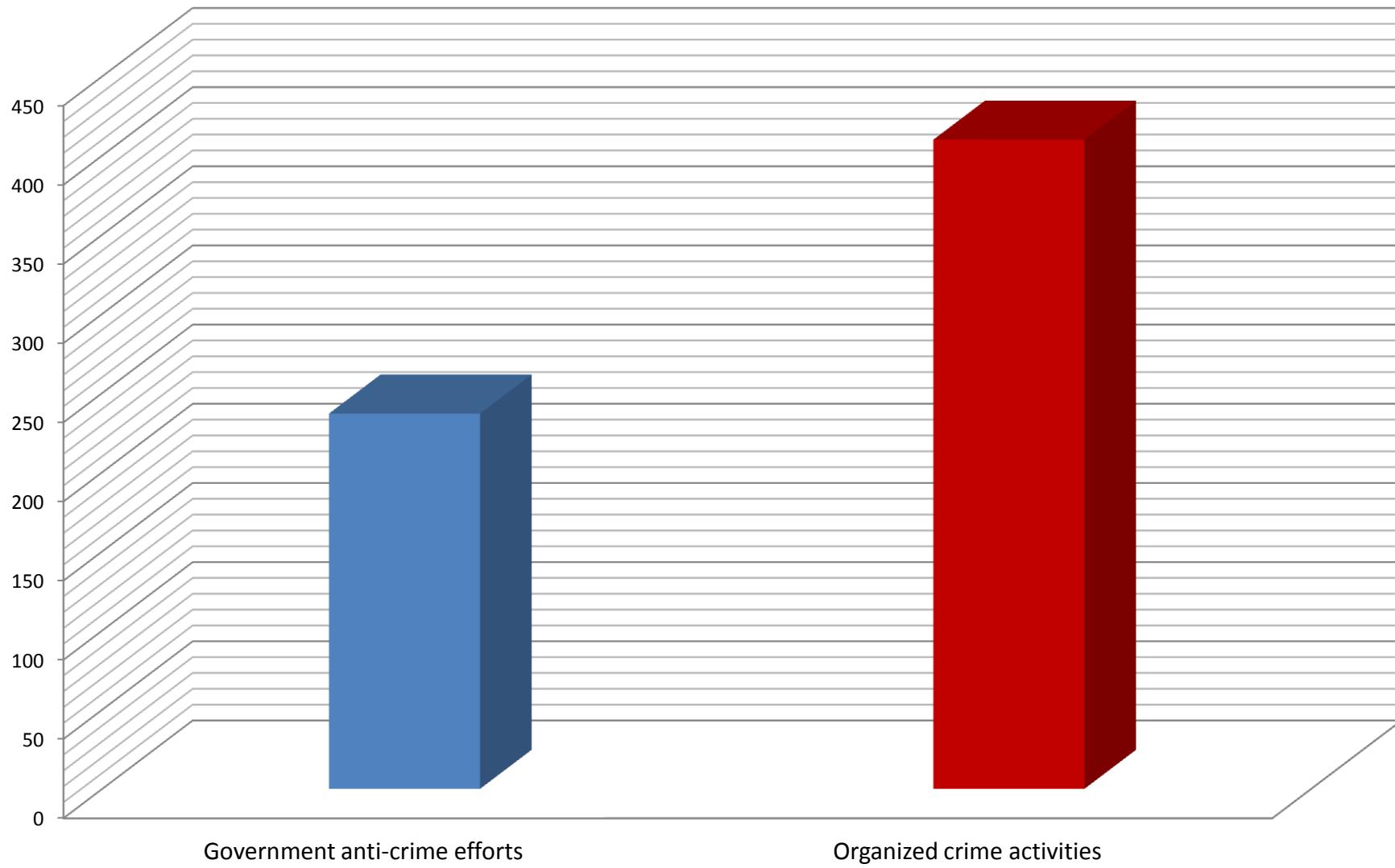
### NORTE



\*Only 6 months

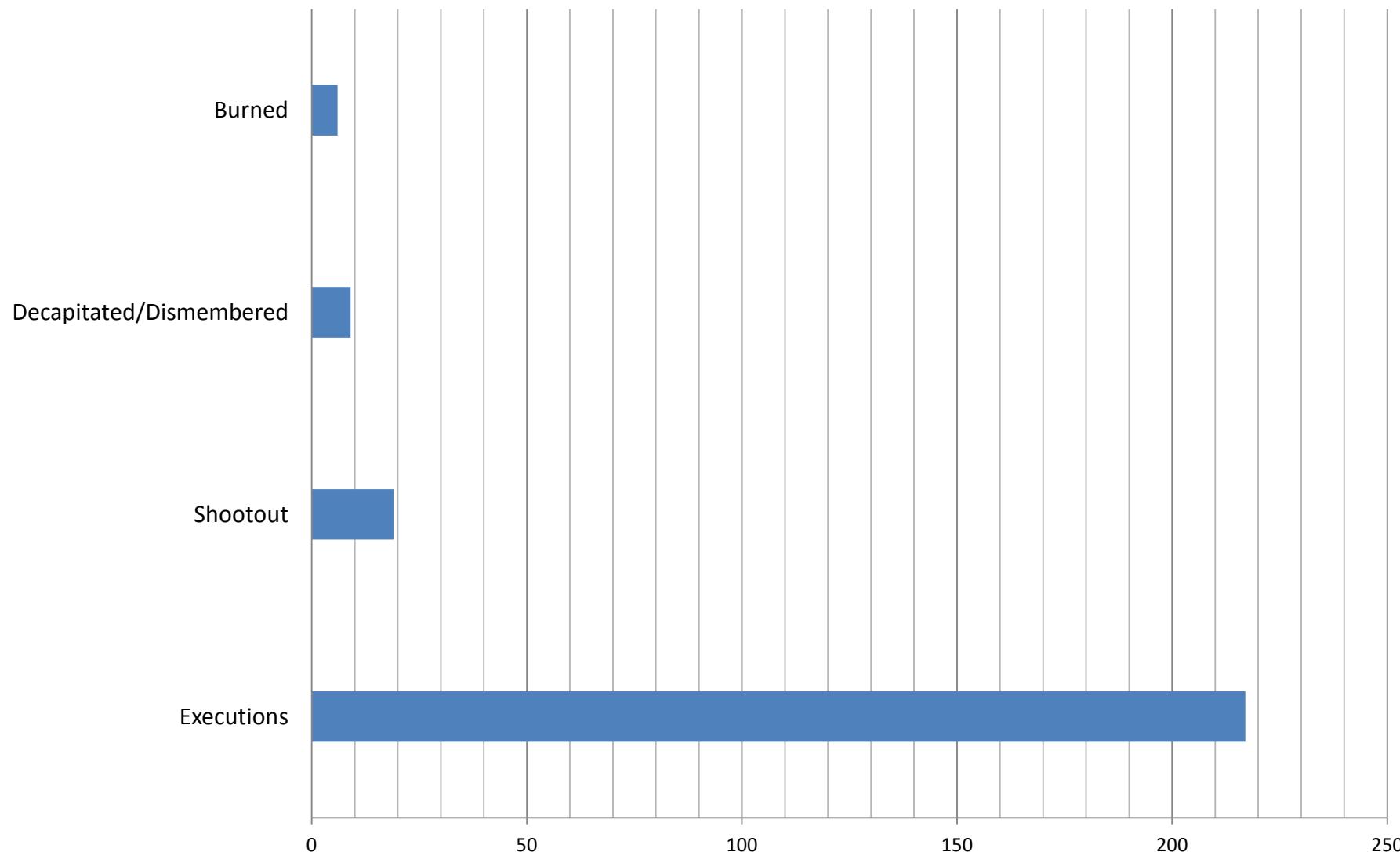


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



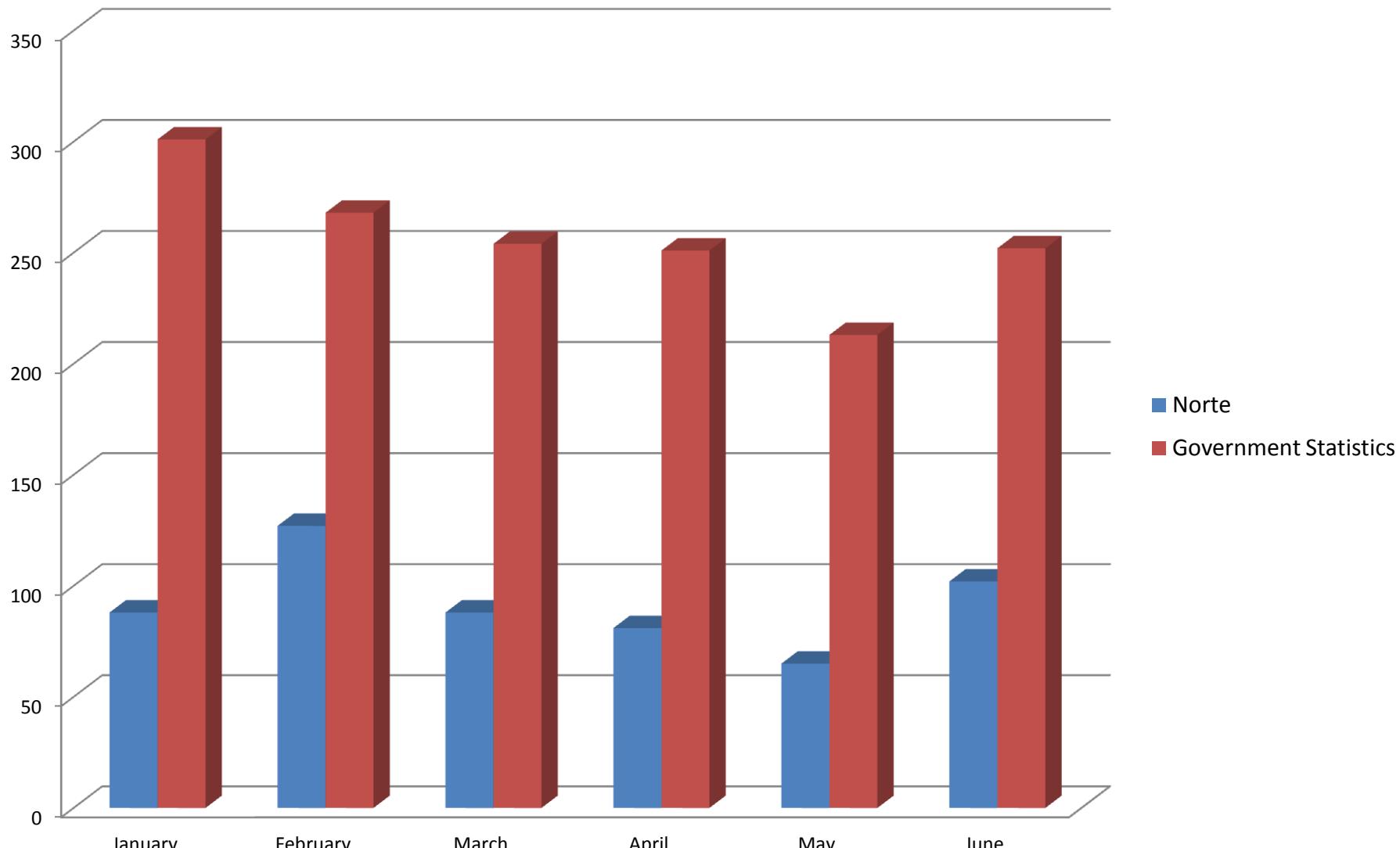


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS





## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME

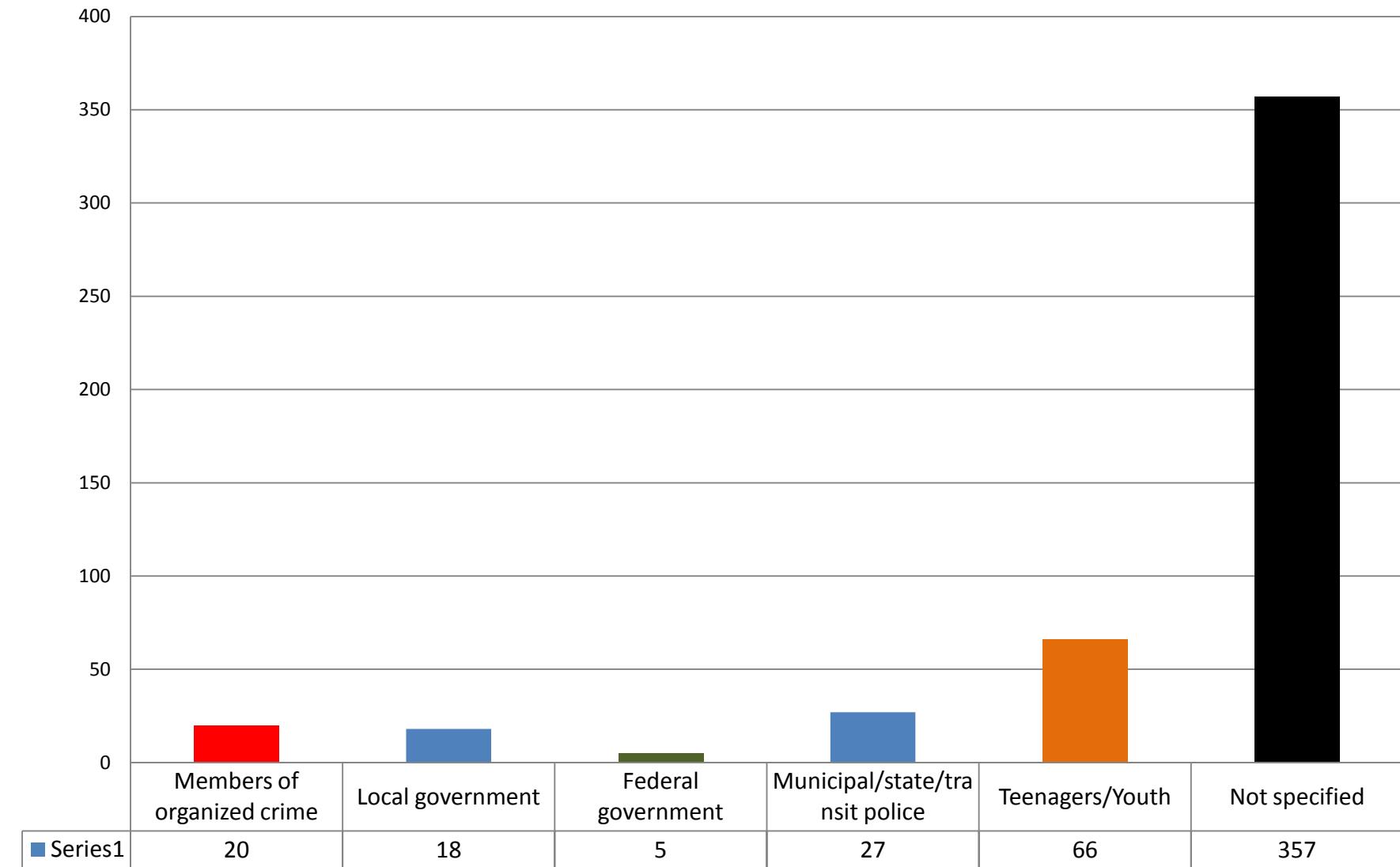


Tecnológico de Monterrey,  
Mexico City Campus

\*\*According to the daily's crime stories and government homicide statistics.



## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- The daily **Norte** only reports on Ciudad Juarez, a vibrant city center that was overran by drug violence in 2010. MEPI monitored the first six months in 2011 when violence peaked before subsiding by year's end when the Sinaloa Cartel took over the territory from the Juarez Cartel and several smaller gangs.
- There is a general distrust of federal police forces in the city and according to local journalists, citizens tend to believe more in the word of local drug leaders than officials, despite the drug-related violence.
- Changes in daily life:
  - Local government officials warn youth against attending house parties after a number of mass murders at private homes.
  - Threats on schools multiply. Parents keep children away from school.
  - Organized crime groups focused recruitment efforts on youth. Young women were selected to collect extorsion money.

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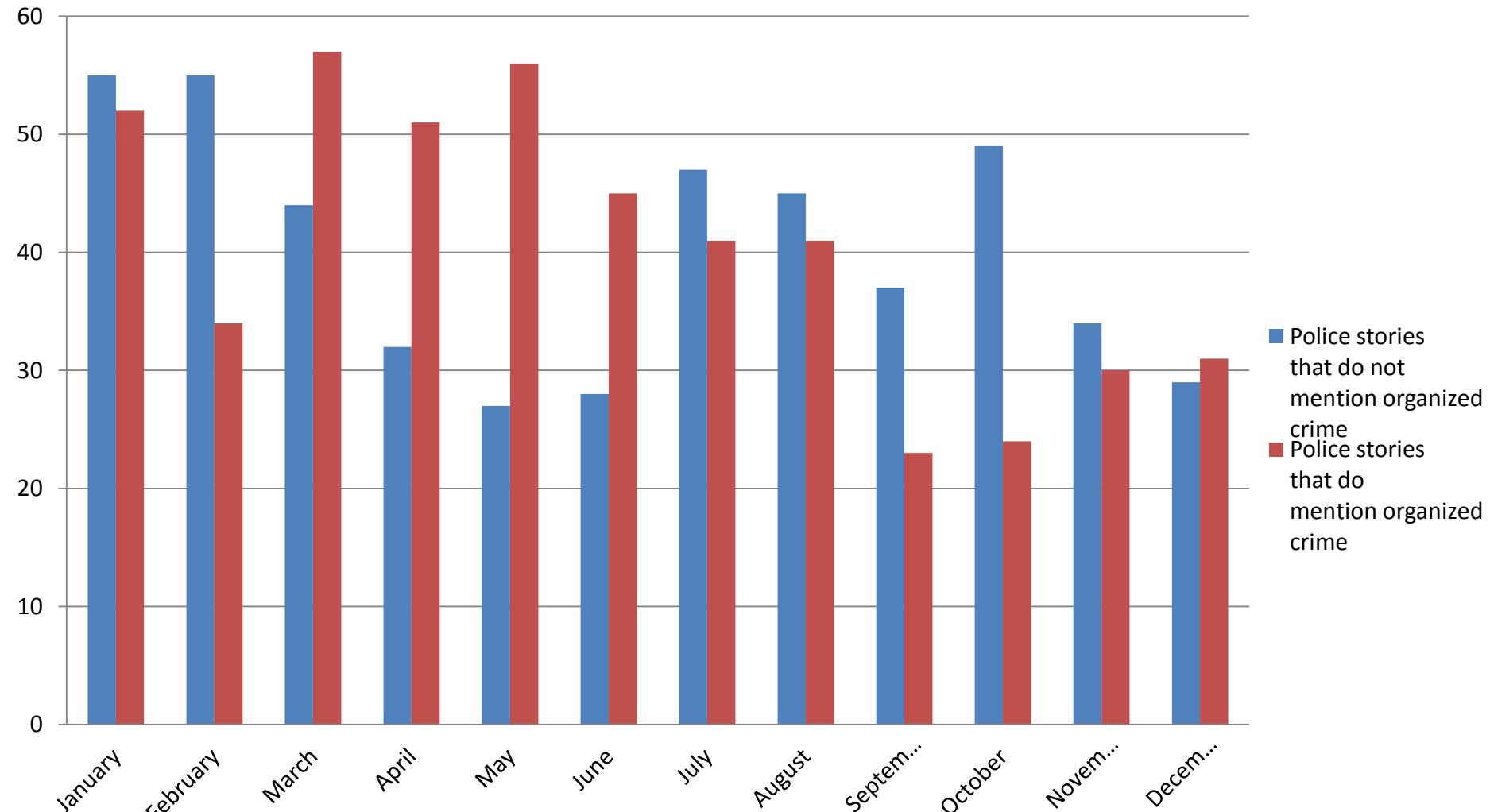
# Durango, Durango

*El Siglo de Durango*



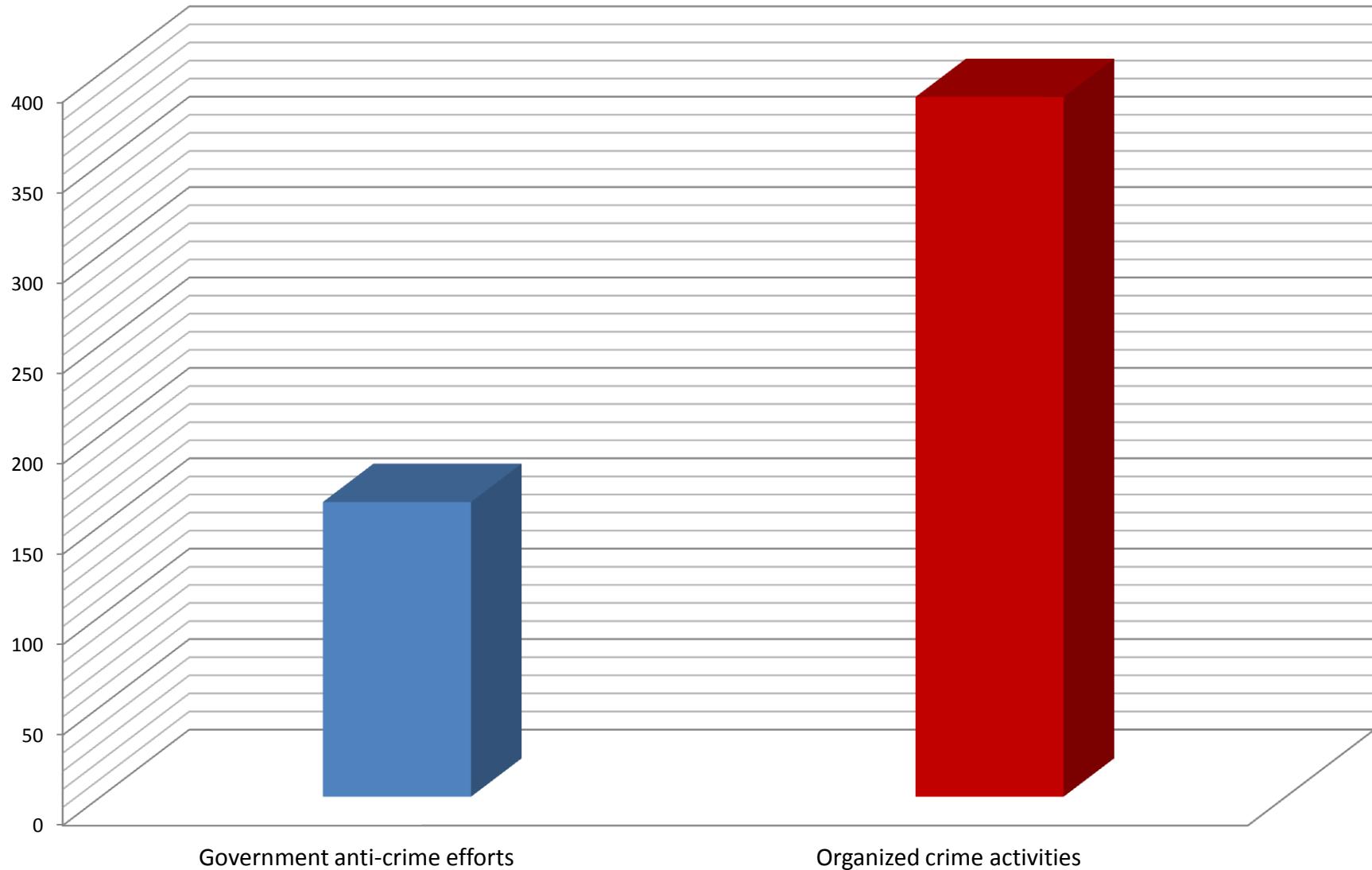
## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS

### EL SIGLO DE DURANGO



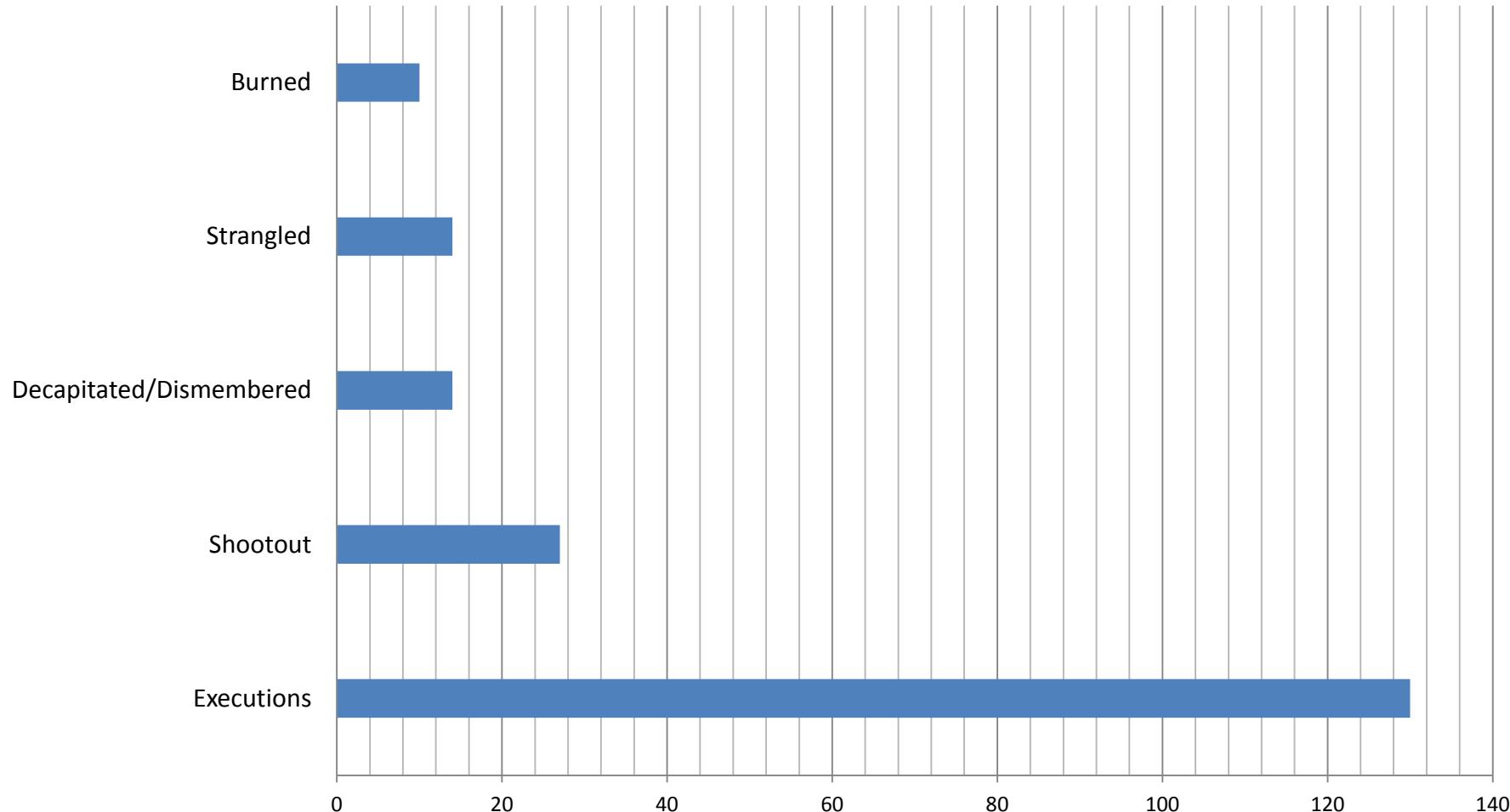


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



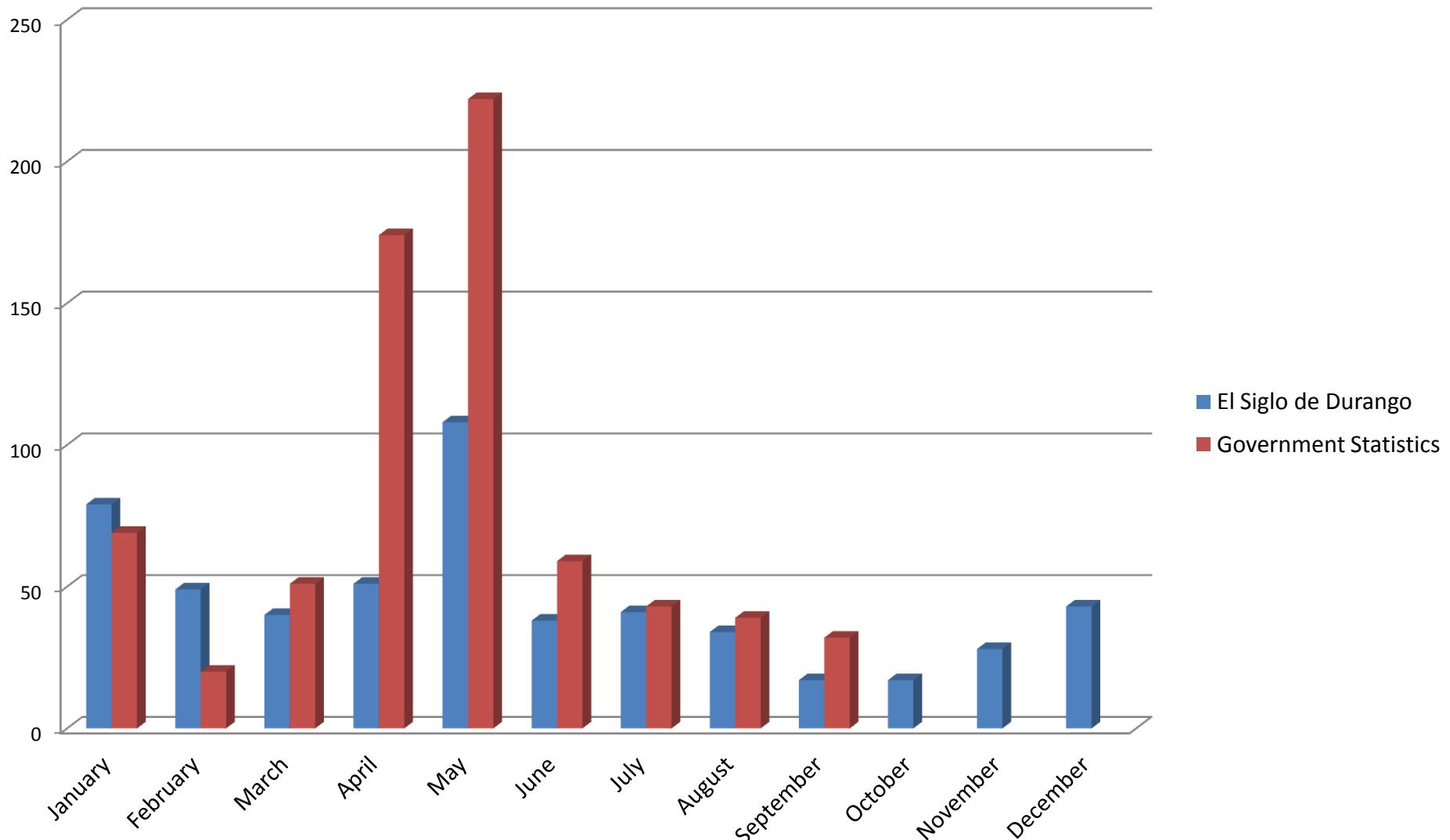


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



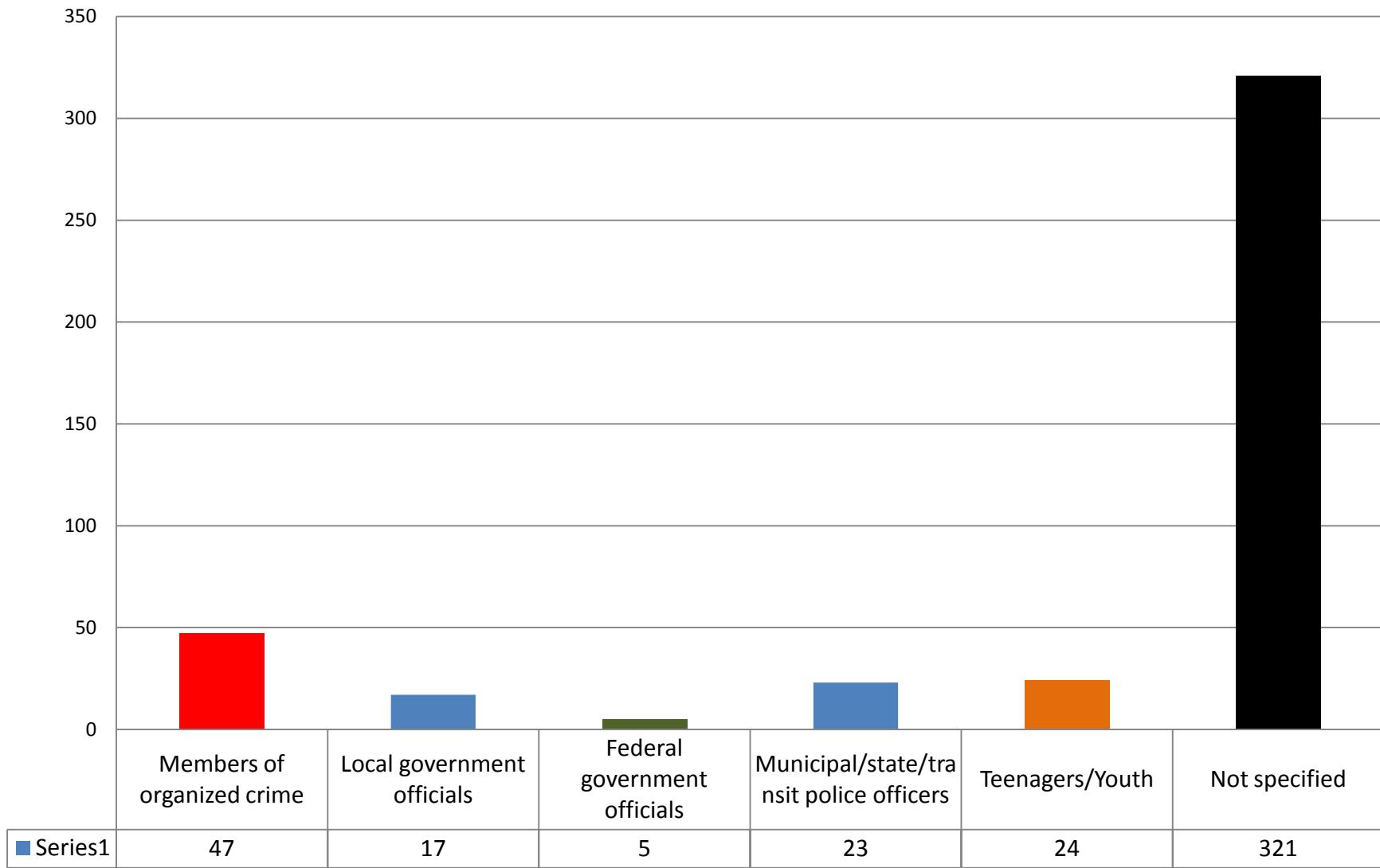


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- The news outlet mentioned organized crime activity in its reporting but no specific cartels were named.
- In 2011 authorities in Durango found several mass graves with about 200 bodies in them. Security experts believe that the organized crime groups that buried the bodies were trying to hide them to avoid retaliation. The state is a contested territory among the Sinaloa Cartel and the Zetas. Organized crime used high-powered rifles and attacked state police forces in groups of up to 50 men.
- During the first four months of 2011, the armed forces reported capturing 168 organized crime members, but the daily did not report on most of these arrests.
- Changes in daily life:
  - Being a musician or lawyer became a high-risk profession. The Law College of Durango and the Musicians Conservatory reported high numbers of threats and kidnappings.

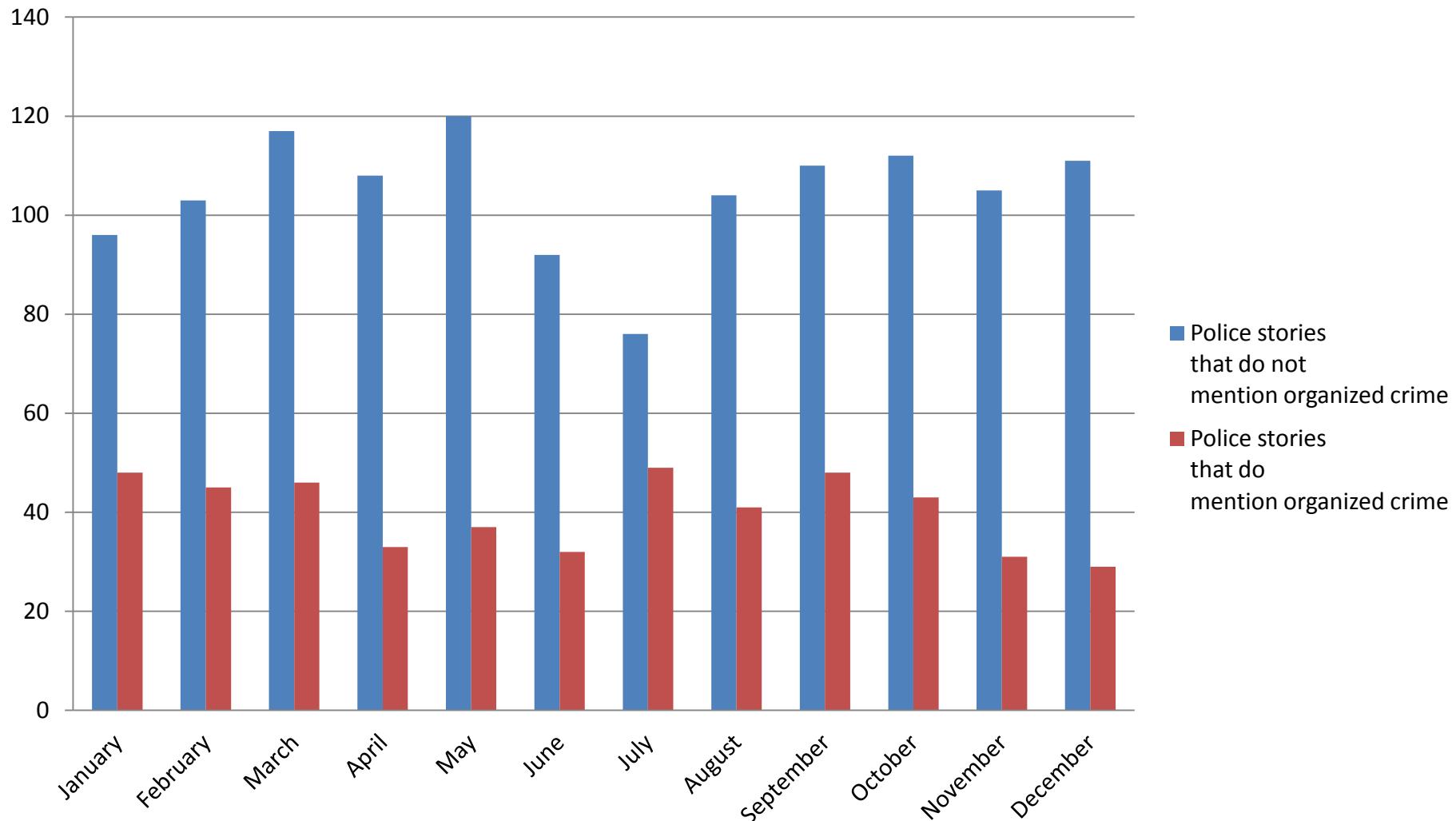


# ZACATECAS, ZACATECAS

*Imagen Zacatecas*

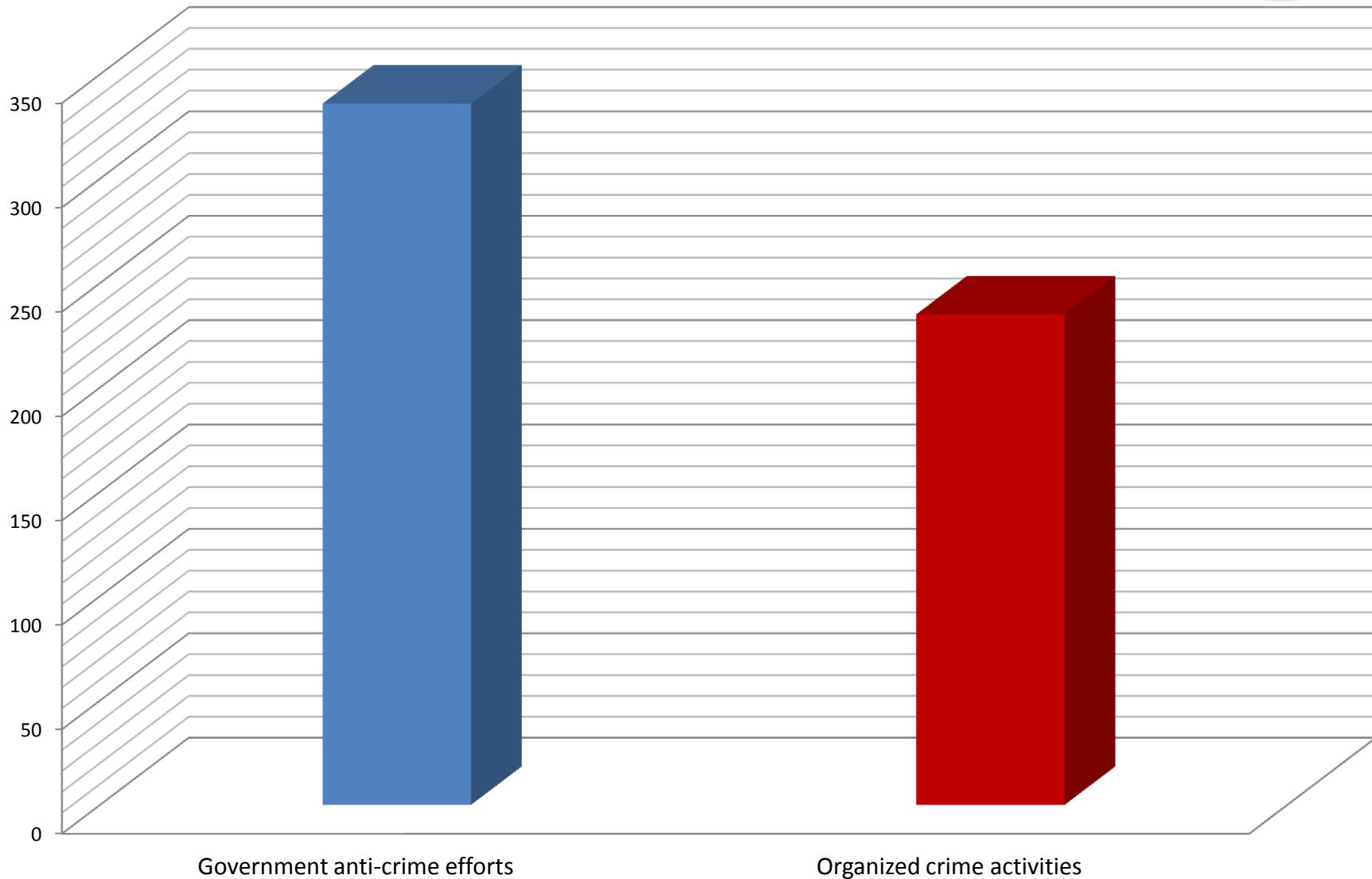


## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS IMAGEN ZACATECAS



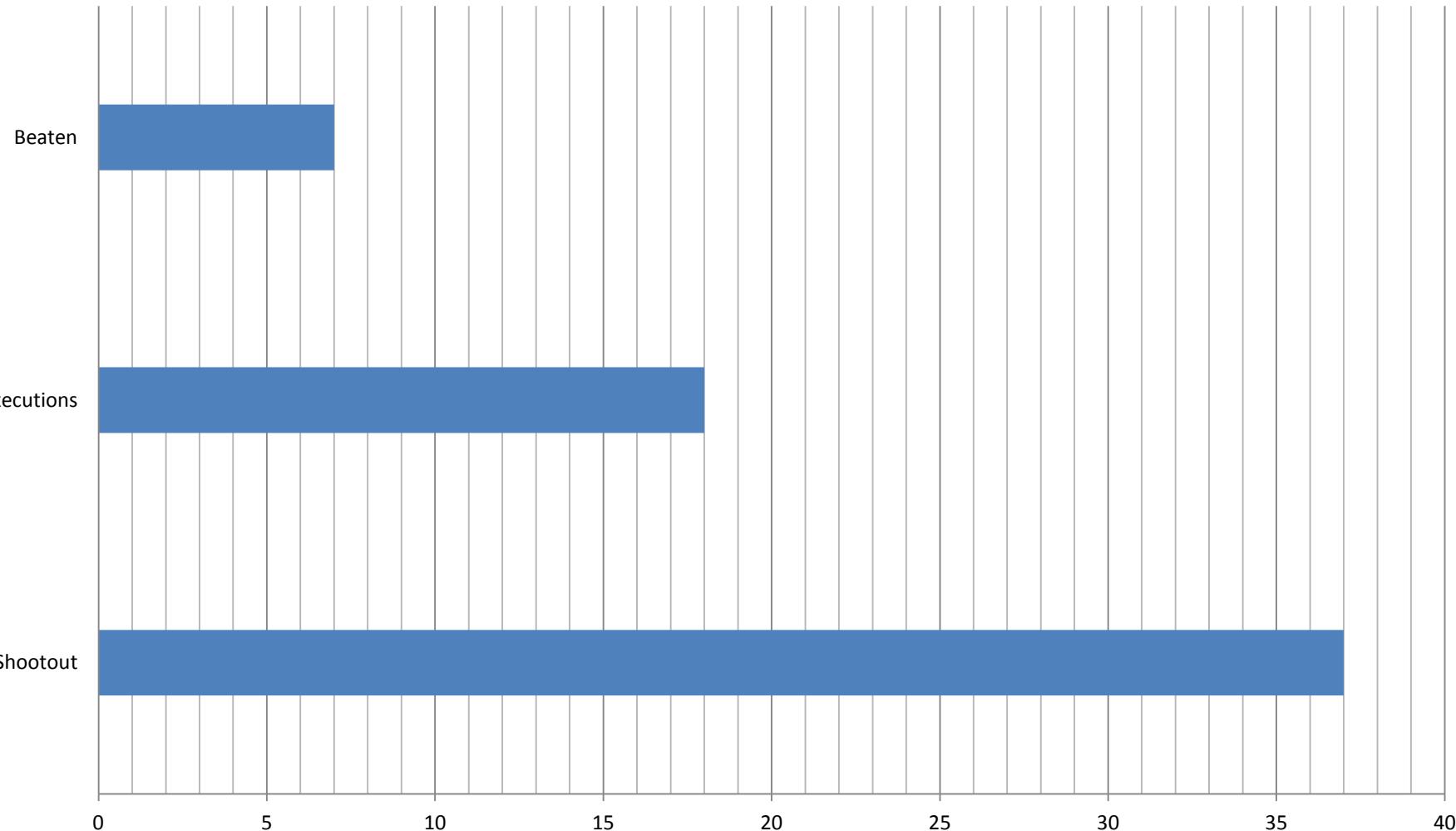


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



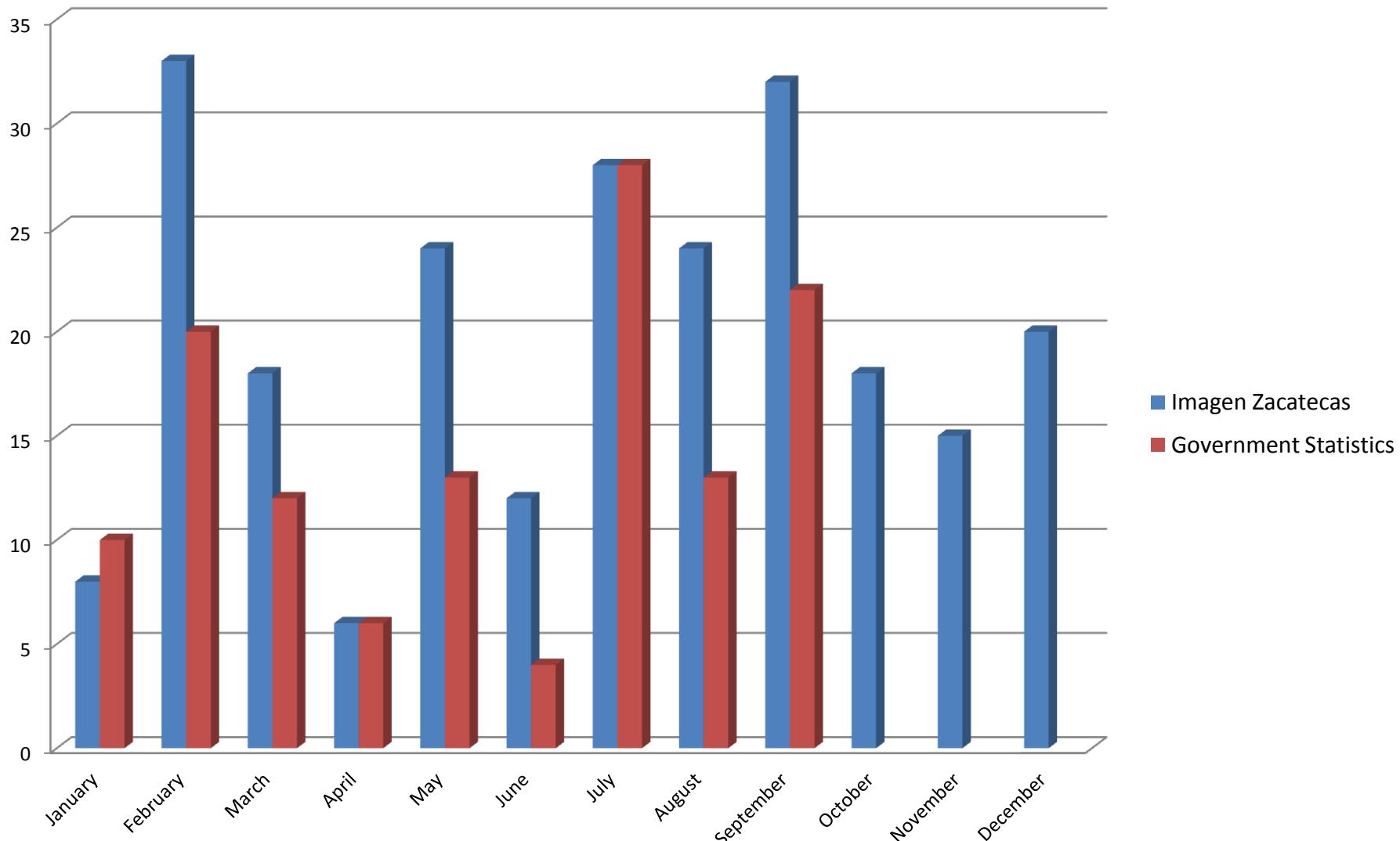


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



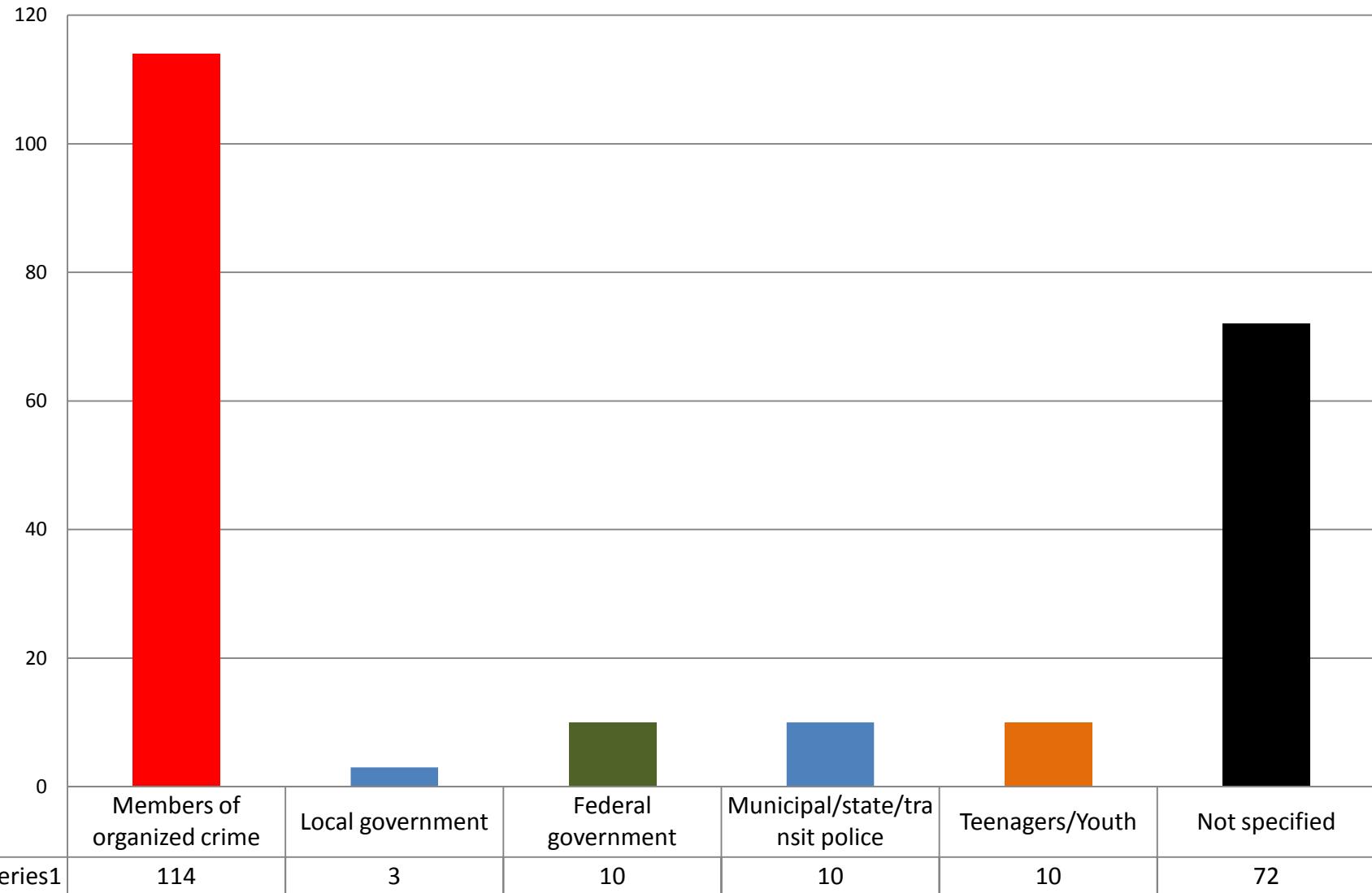


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- Zacatecas is a state where the Zetas had considerable control in 2011. However, the stories in the daily quoted citizens expressing admiration and trust for the army units patrolling the state.
- The daily reported on more anti-crime activities than those carried out by organized crime, a trend that was common in states controlled by one cartel.
- No cartels were named in the news stories. The daily described organized crime members as “armed groups” or “armed civilians.”
- In early 2011, reports on the kidnappings and release of state and municipal policemen highlighted cartel efforts to infiltrate the police.
- Changes in daily life:
  - Taxi drivers stopped night work out of fear for their safety. The Zetas often forced them to become lookouts and informants.

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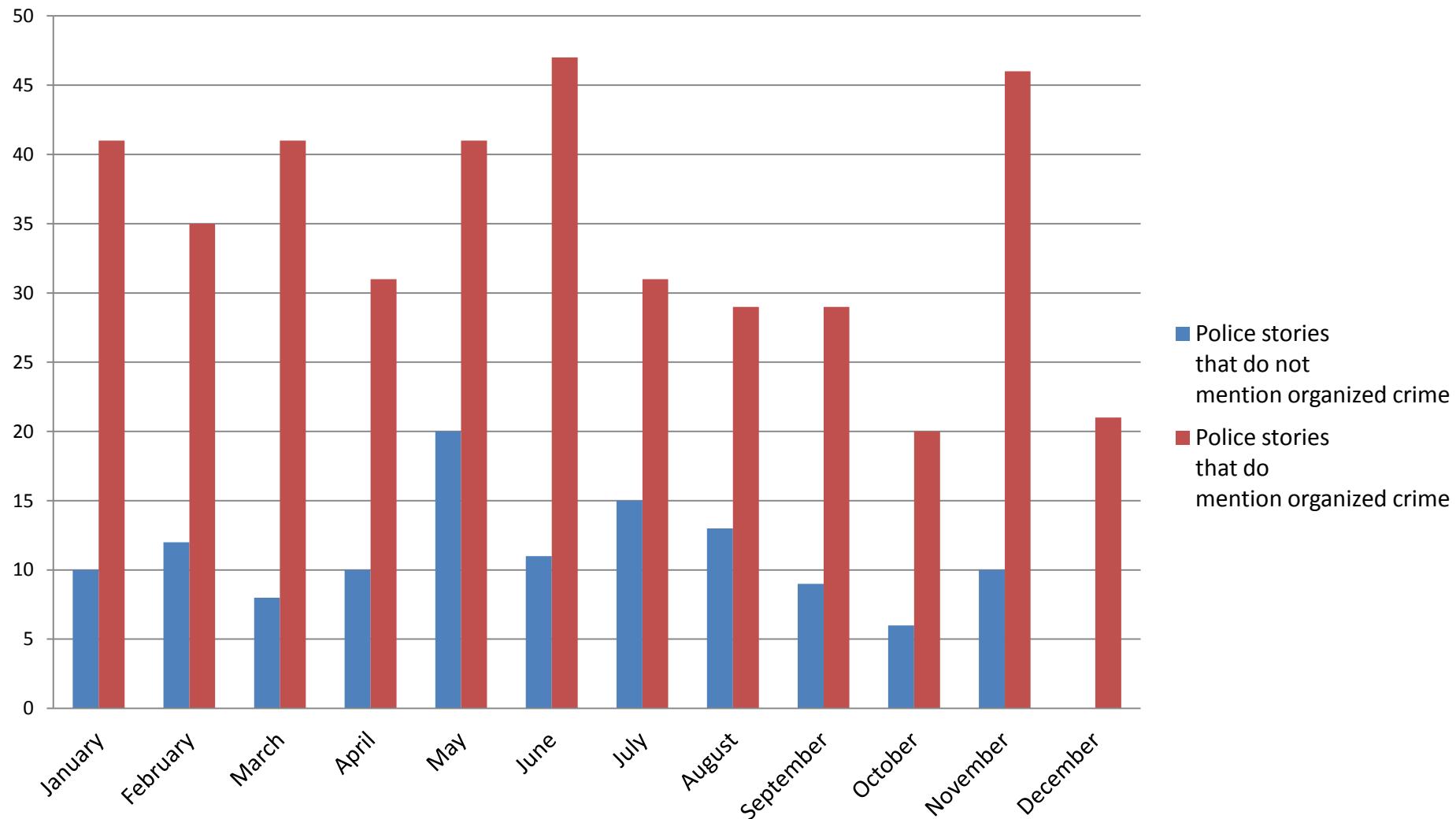
# GUADALAJARA, JALISCO

*El Informador*



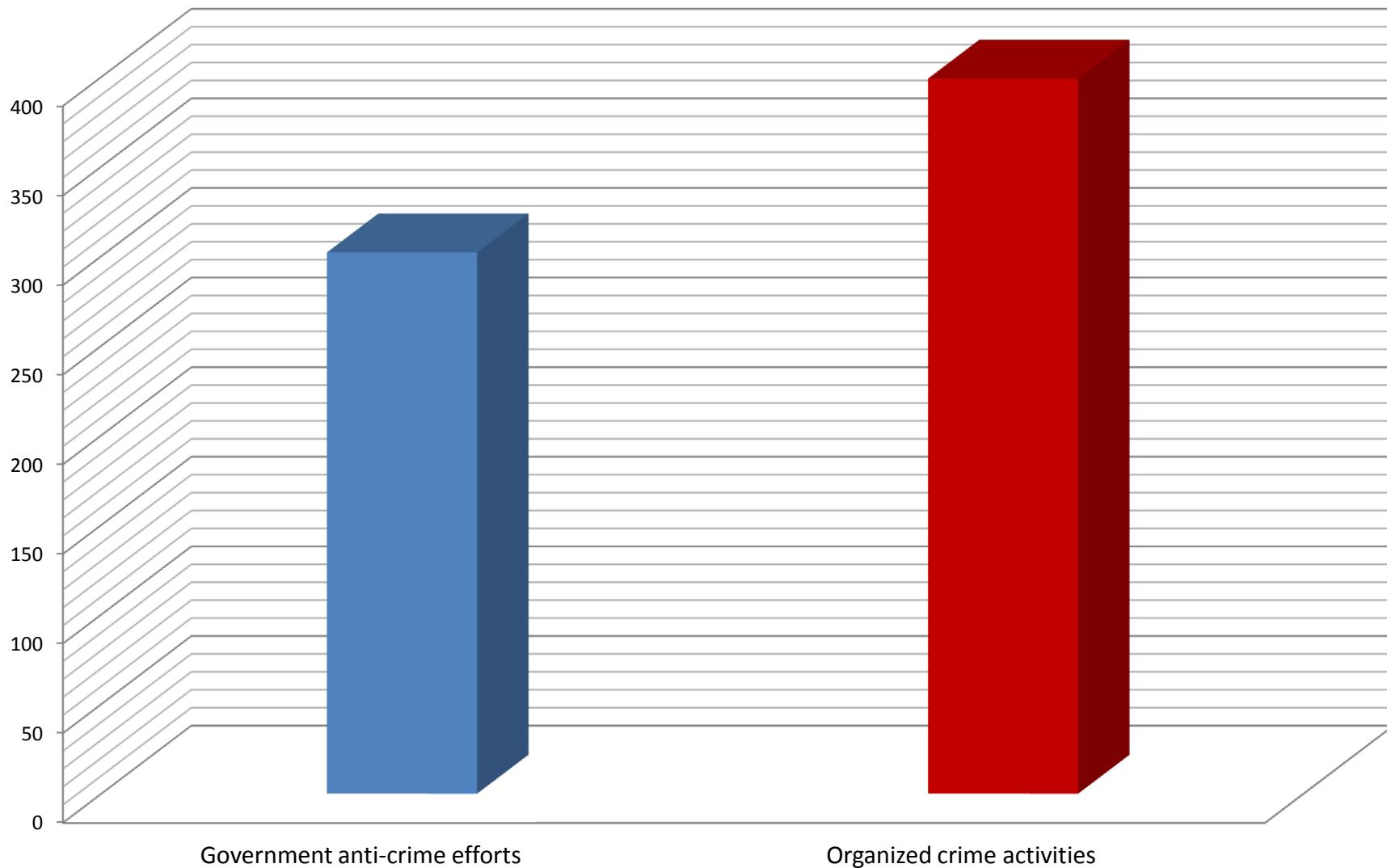
## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS

### *EL INFORMADOR*



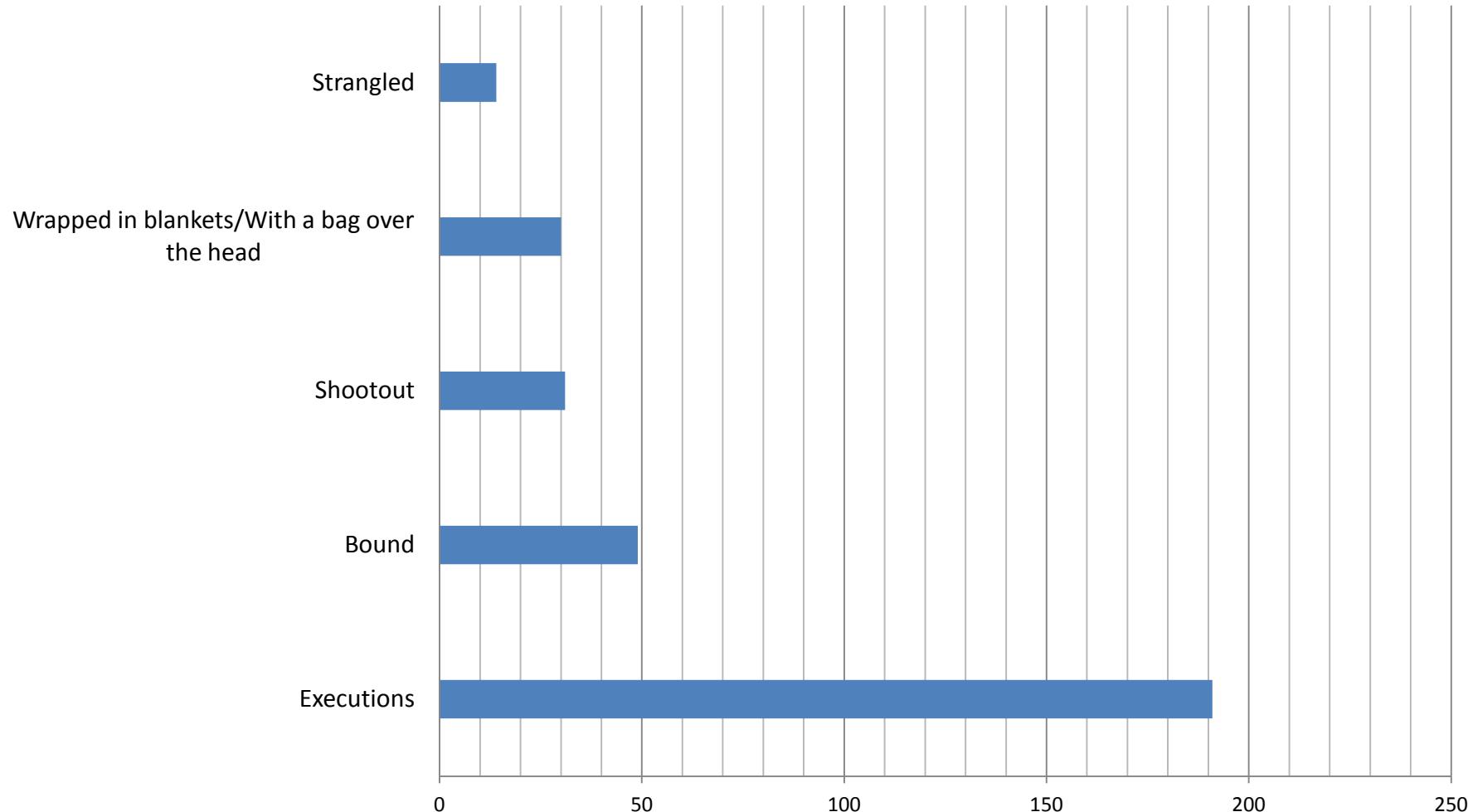


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



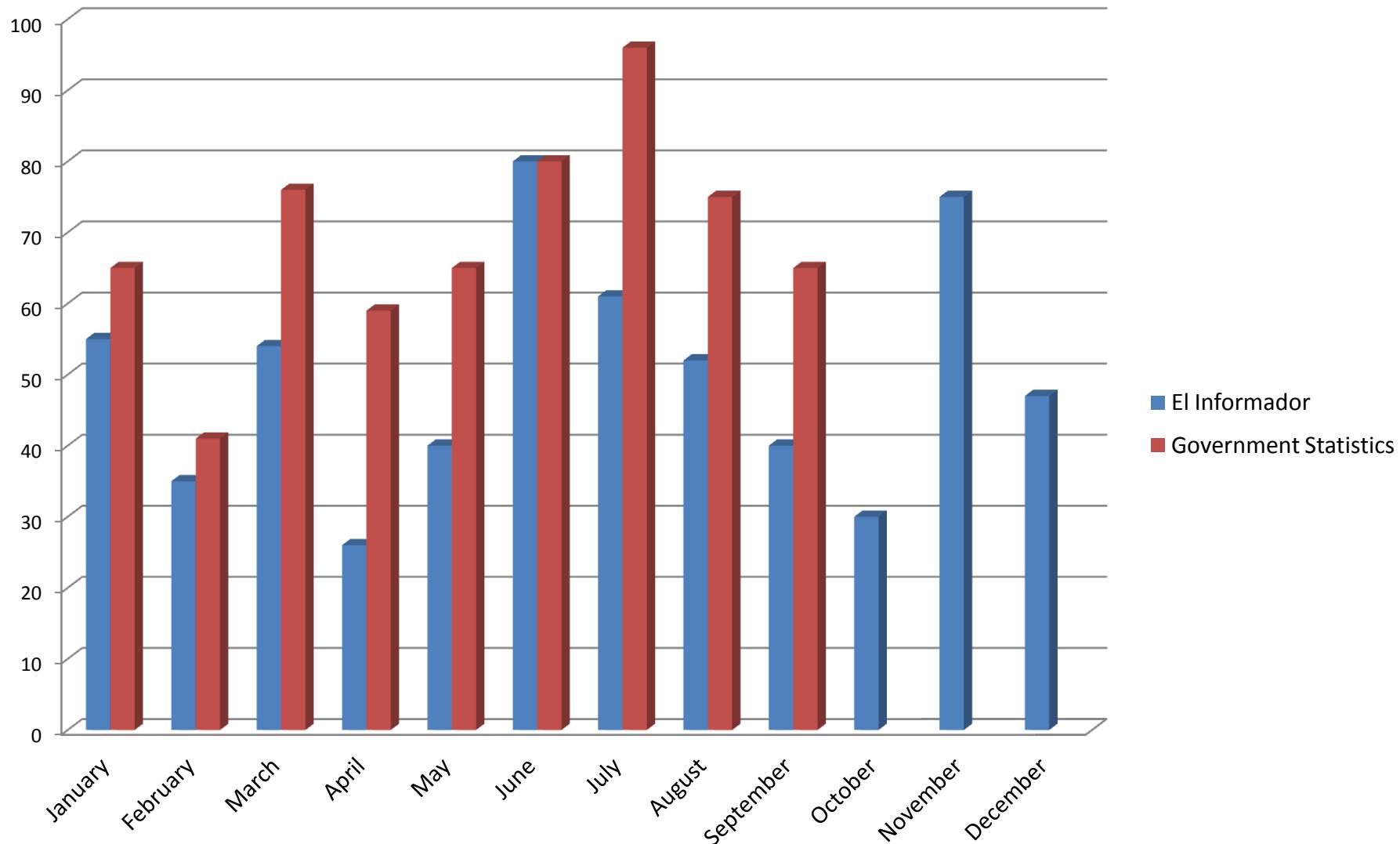


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



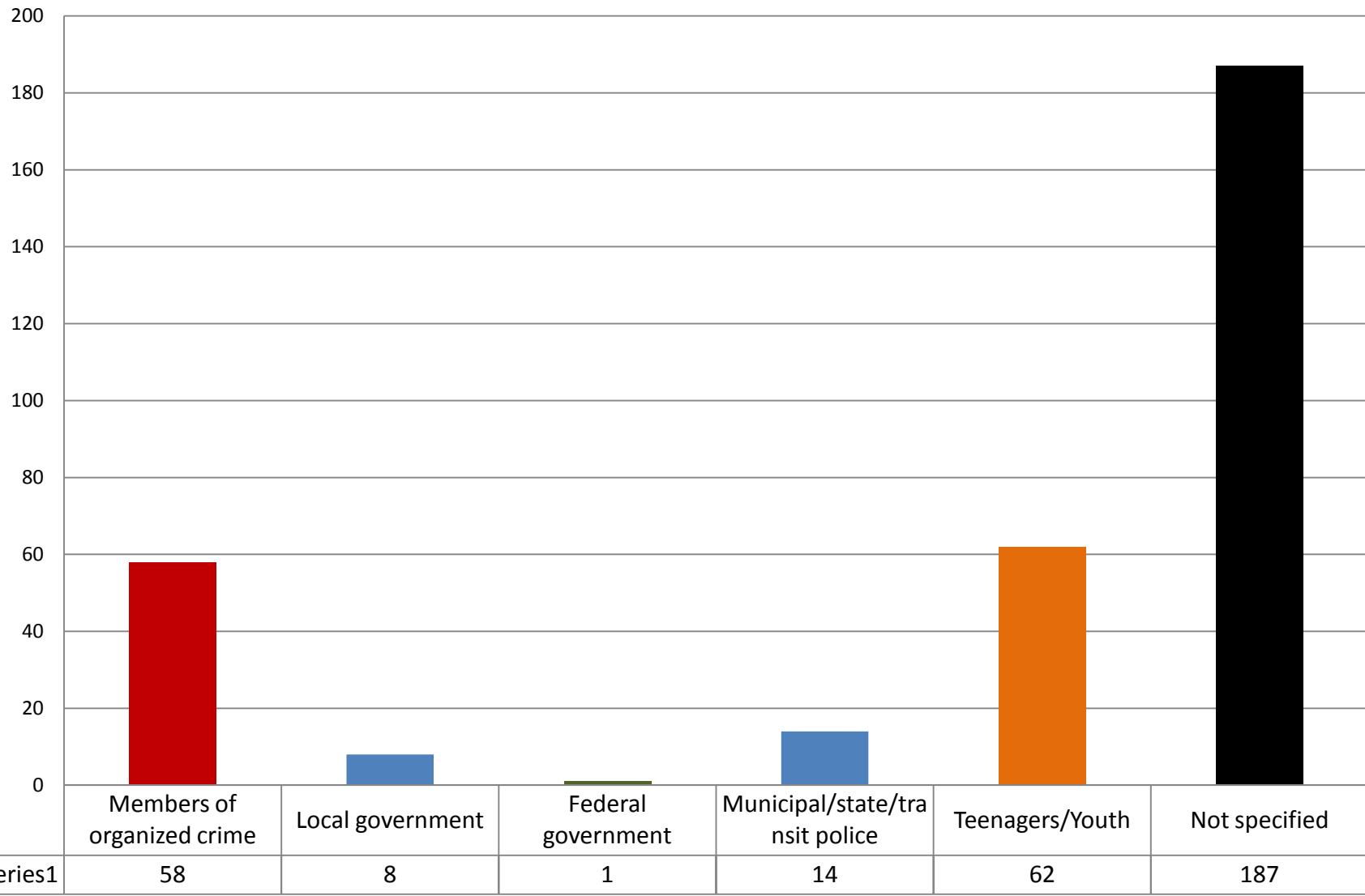


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- *El Informador*, unlike other news outlets, benefitted from complete and timely crime reports from officials in Guadalajara, the country's second largest city. The news outlet provided context in their stories about public safety and organized crime as the city suffered, for the first time in recent memory, a bout of high-profile murder cases such as 26 bodies dumped in a city street.
- Guadalajara had been controlled by the Sinaloa Cartel until recently. The following cartels were identified in news reports as fighting for control in the state: La Resistencia, Zetas, La Familia, Nueva Generación Cartel and Milenio Cartel.
- Executions often took place during parties and at restaurants, in the presence of many witnesses. Cartels blocked principal streets to protest government detentions of their members. Bodies were found hog-tied and with a plastic bag over the head.



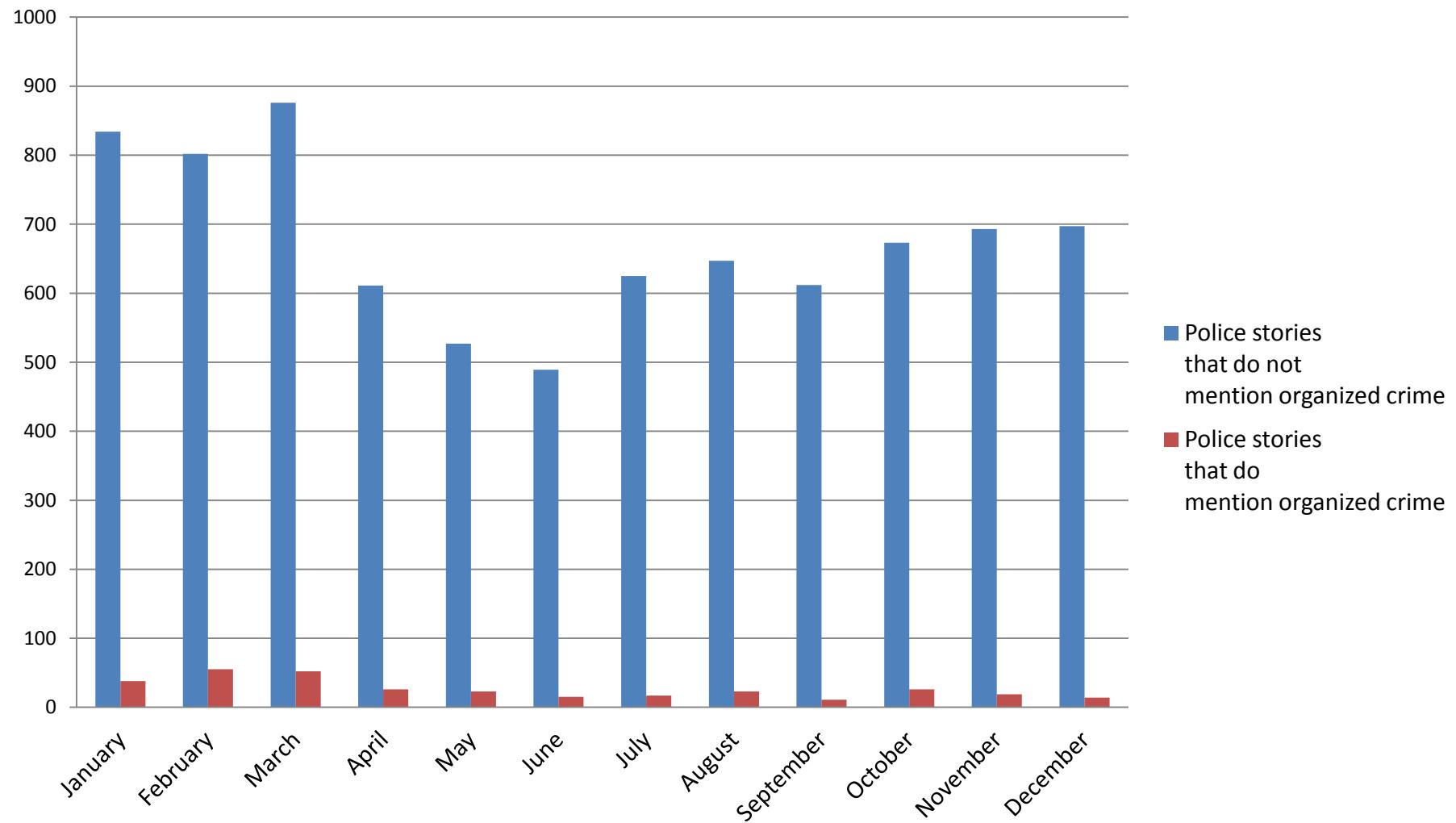
# CIUDAD VICTORIA, TAMAULIPAS

*El Mañana*



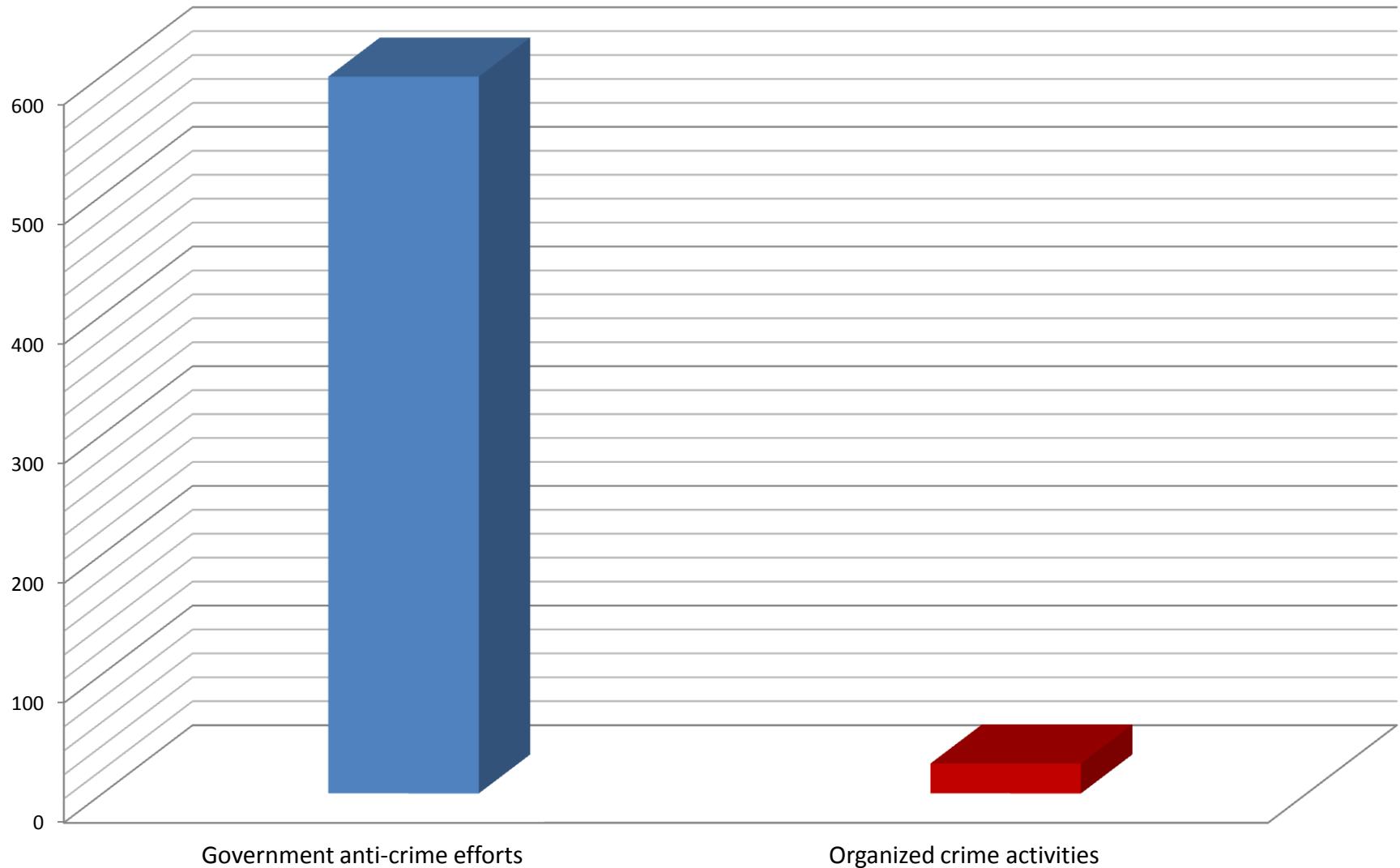
## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS

### EL MAÑANA



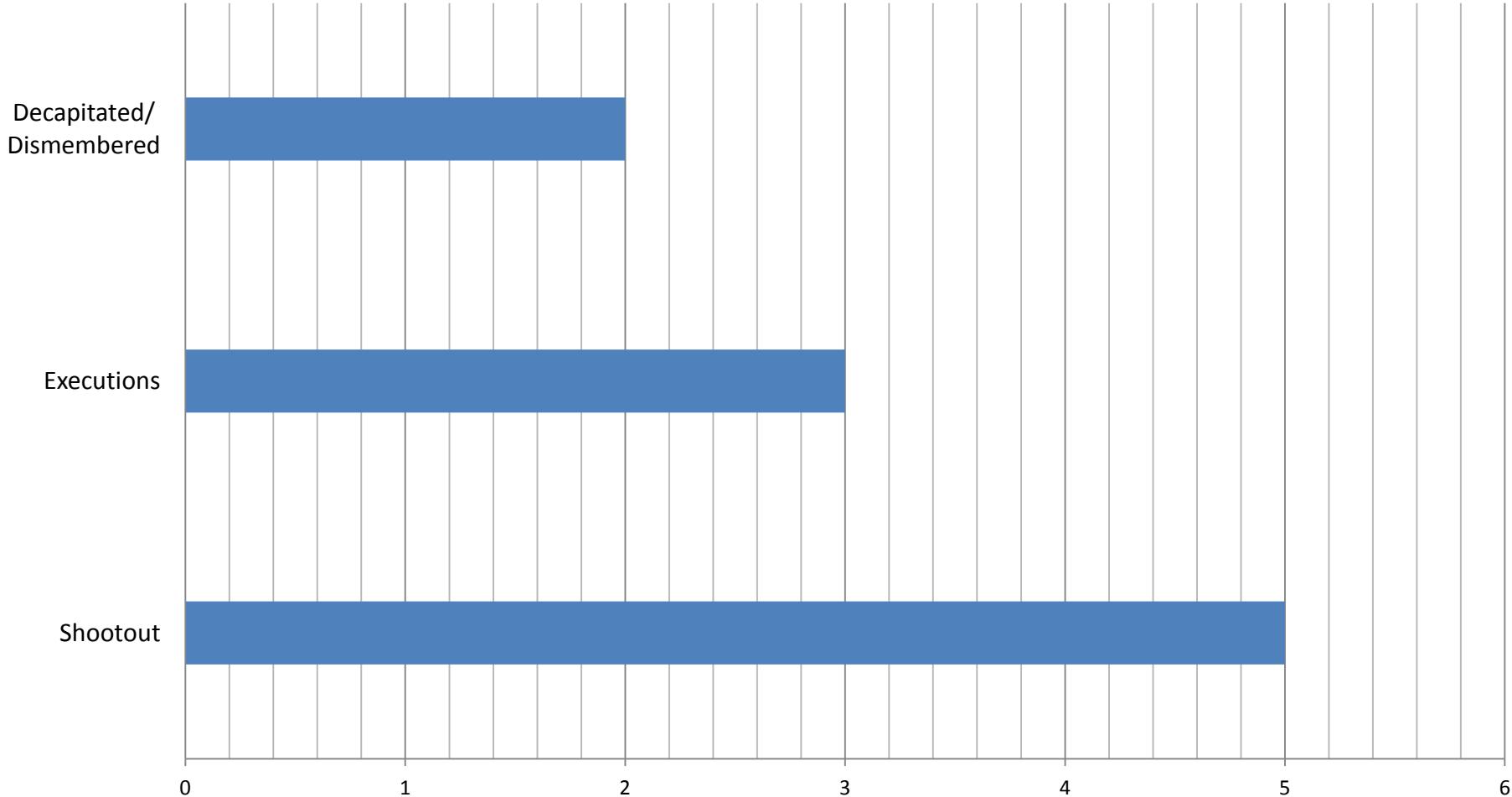


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



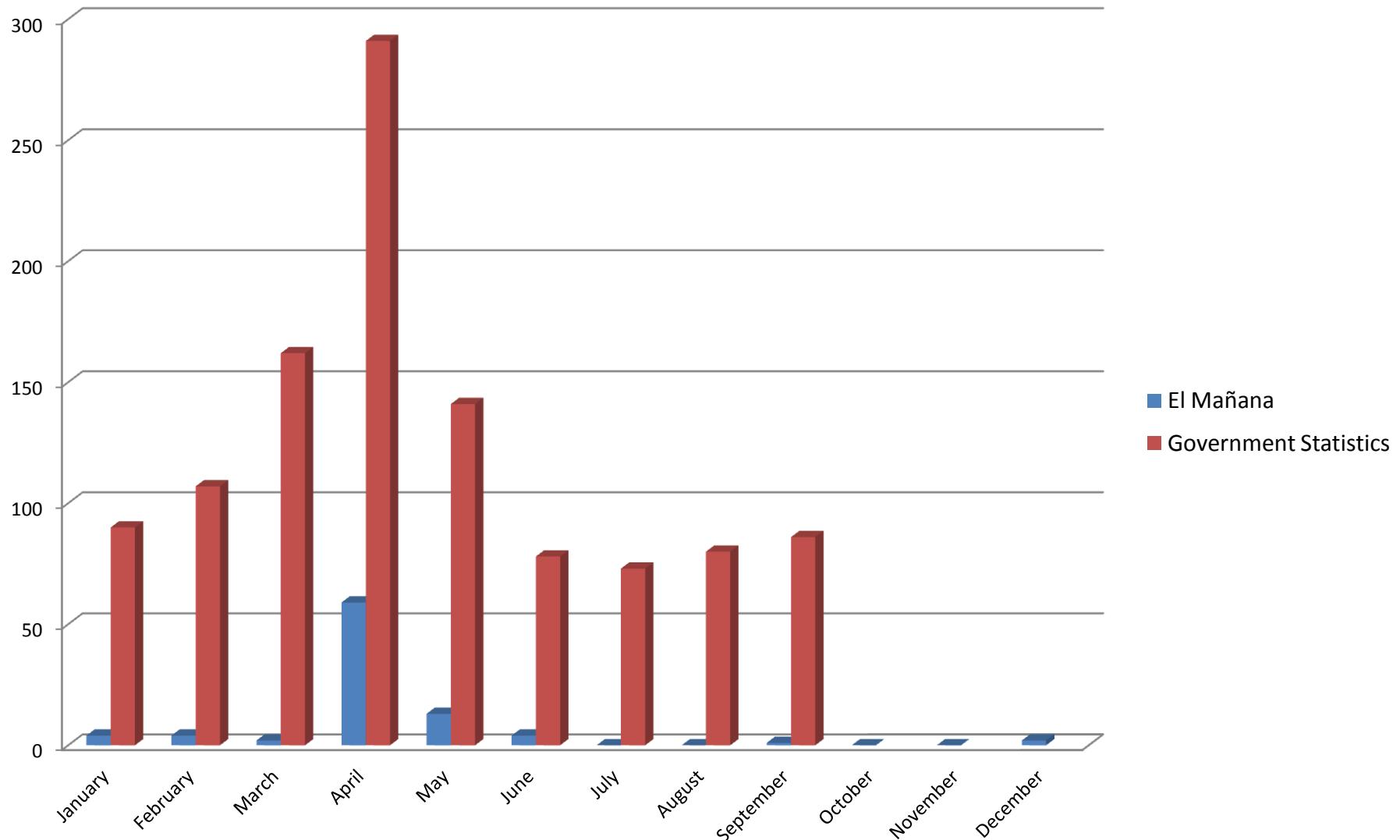


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



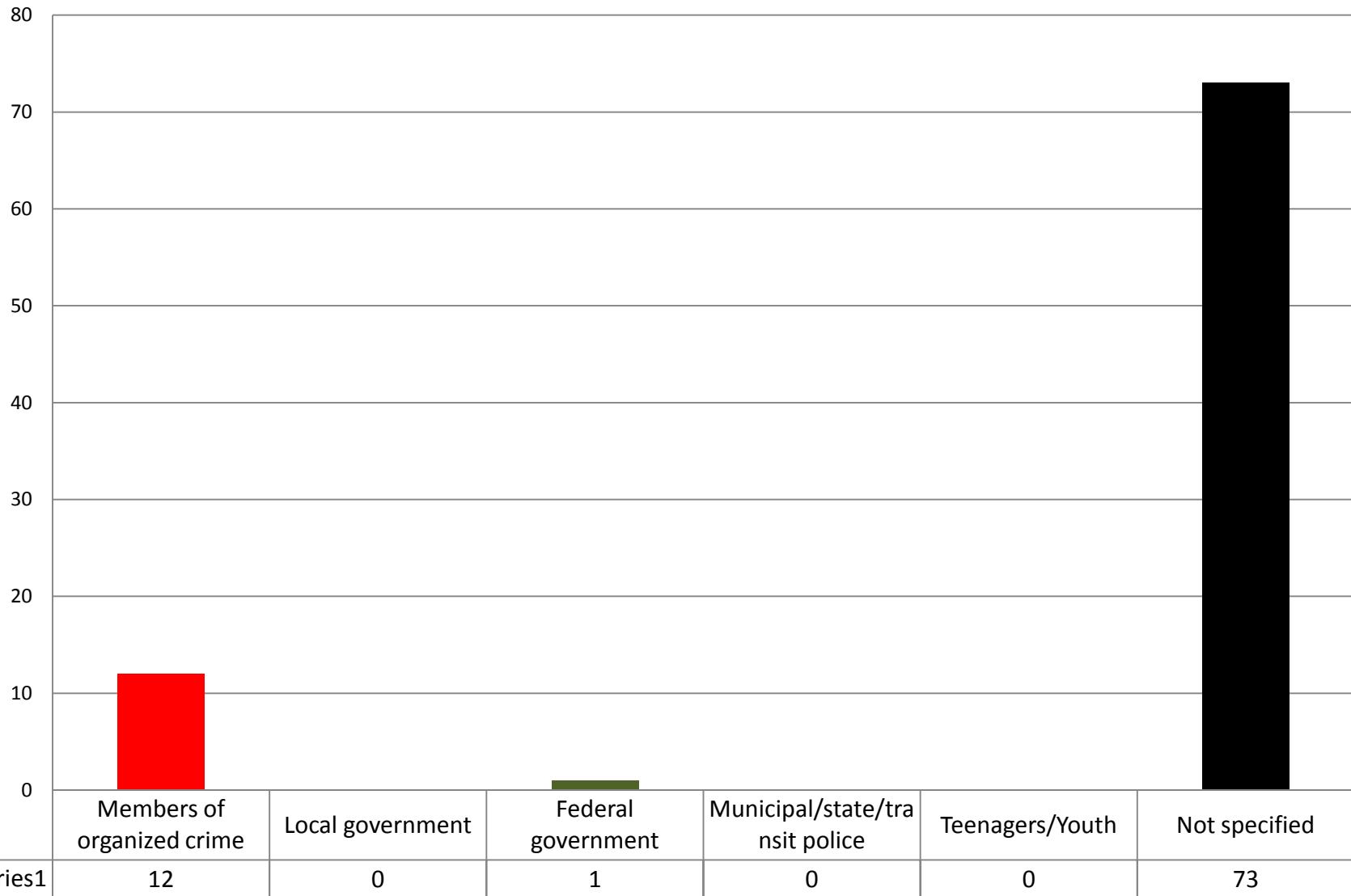


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- Tamaulipas is a state largely controlled by the Zetas Cartel, which enforced tight editorial restrictions on the media in 2011. Yet, the outlet rarely acknowledged organized crime. The handful of crime stories it did report on took place in the Texas Valley including extortions and shootings. This had not been prevalent in the 2010 MEPI study. For the second year in a row, *El Mañana*, appeared to observe almost complete self-censorship.
- The few stories on organized crime reported in 2011 focused on the Zetas' competing cartel, the Gulf Cartel. The daily frequently overlooked stories that did not reflect well on the Zetas. For instance in 2011, the daily did not write about the murder of blogger *La Nena de Laredo* who was presumably slain by Zetas for her critical reports on local crime.
- Tamaulipas is an international transportation hub. There are 16 bi-national bridges between Tamaulipas and the Texas Valley.

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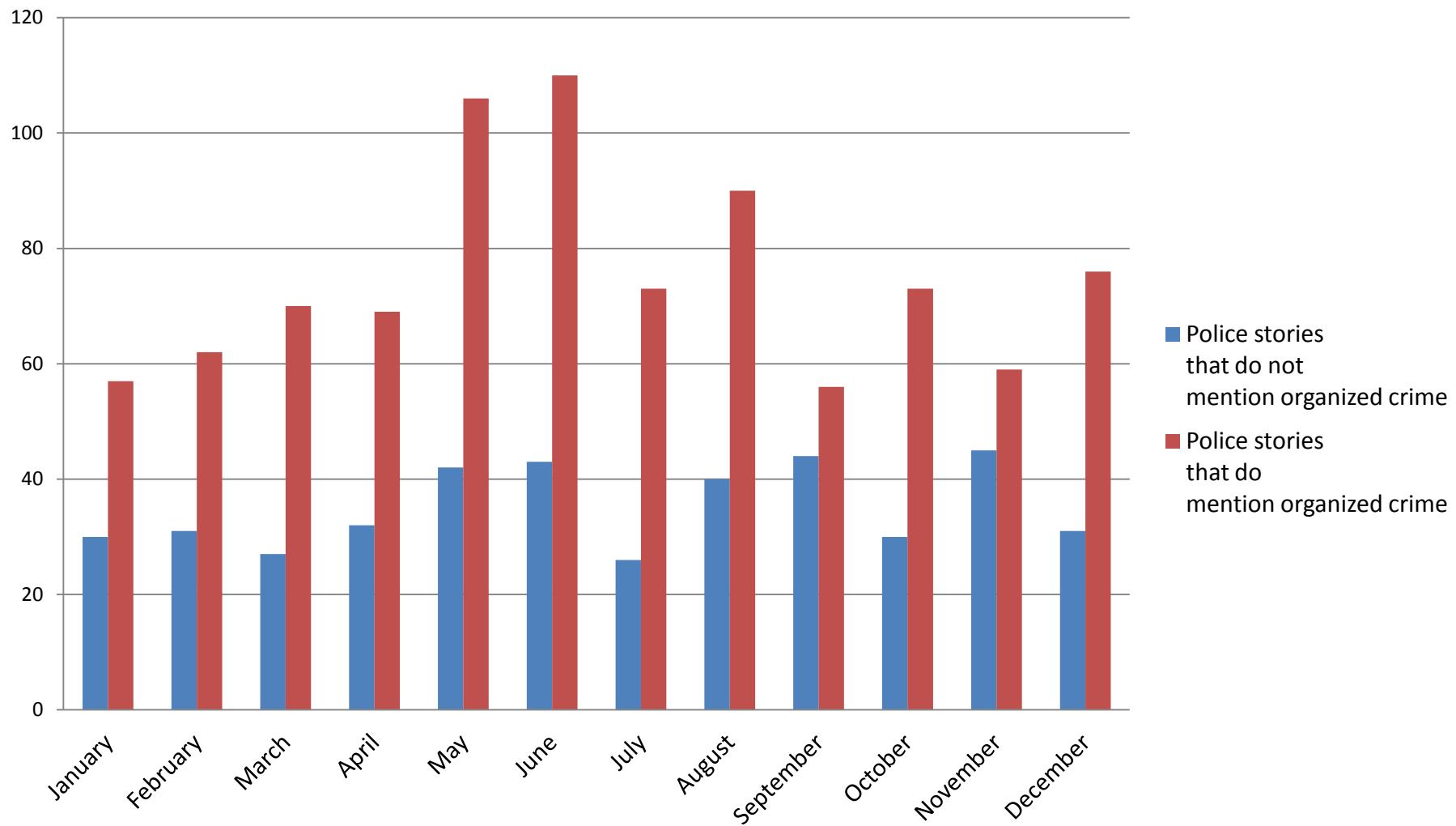
# MONTERREY, NUEVO LEÓN

*El Norte*



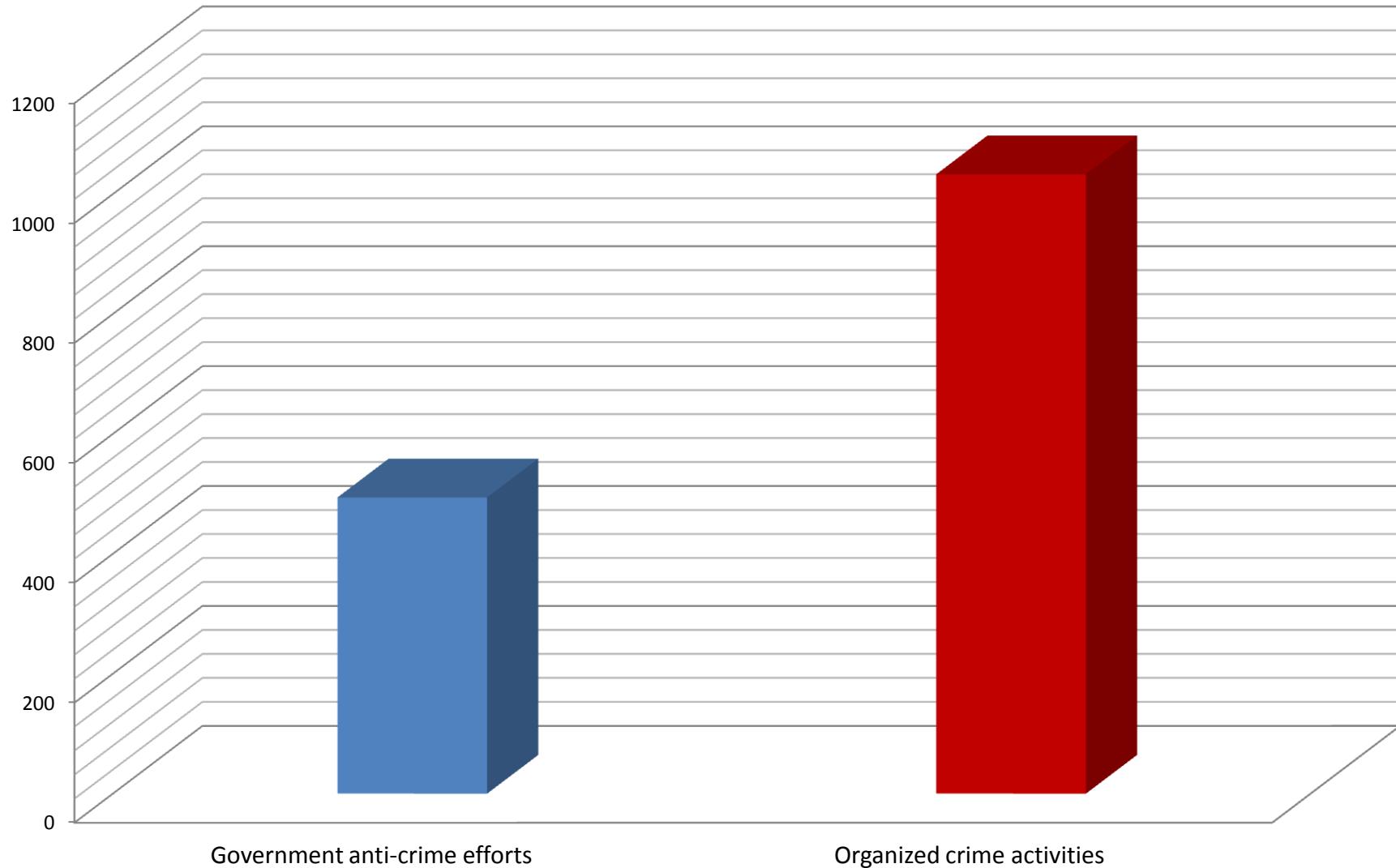
## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS

### EL NORTE



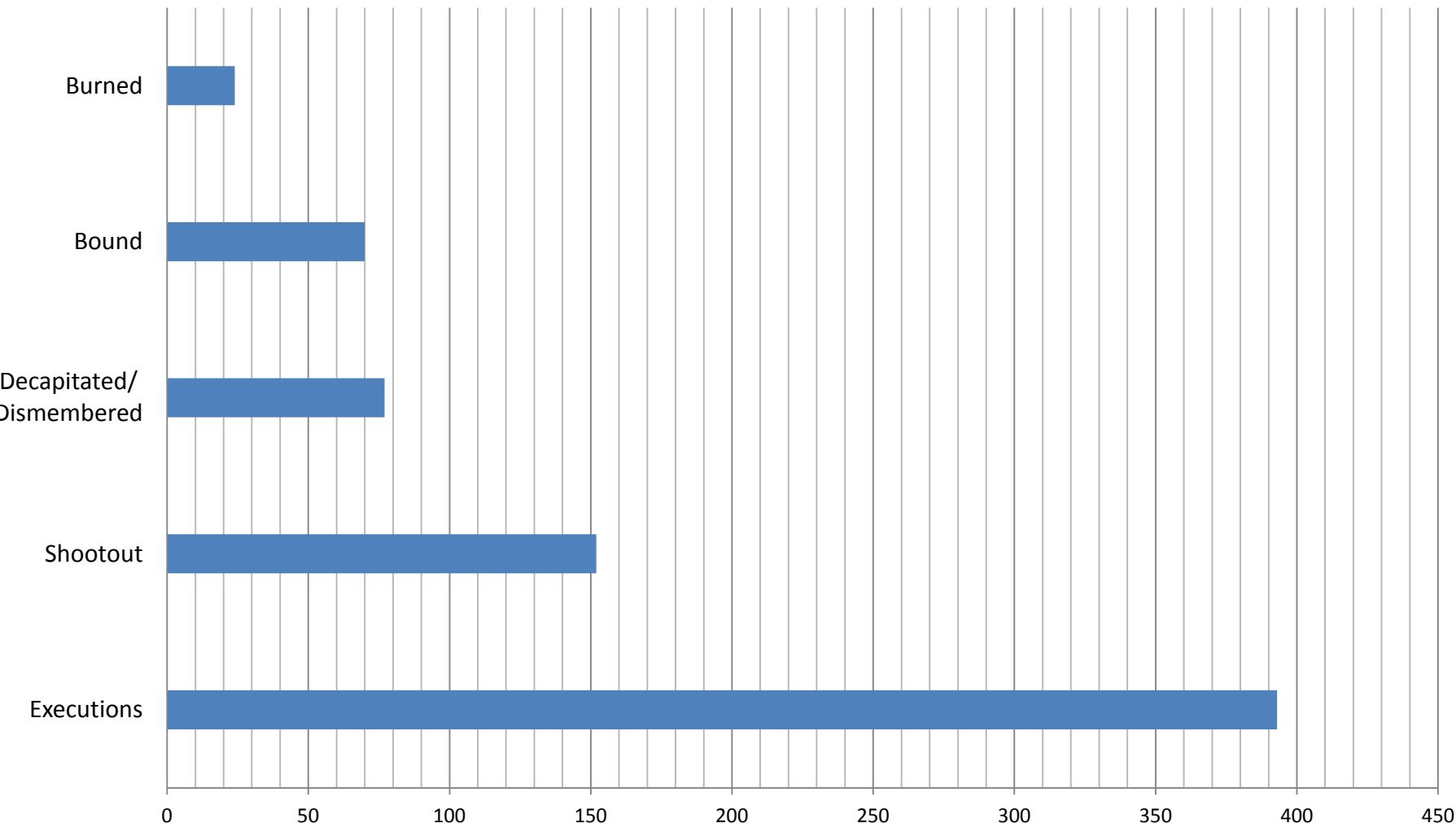


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



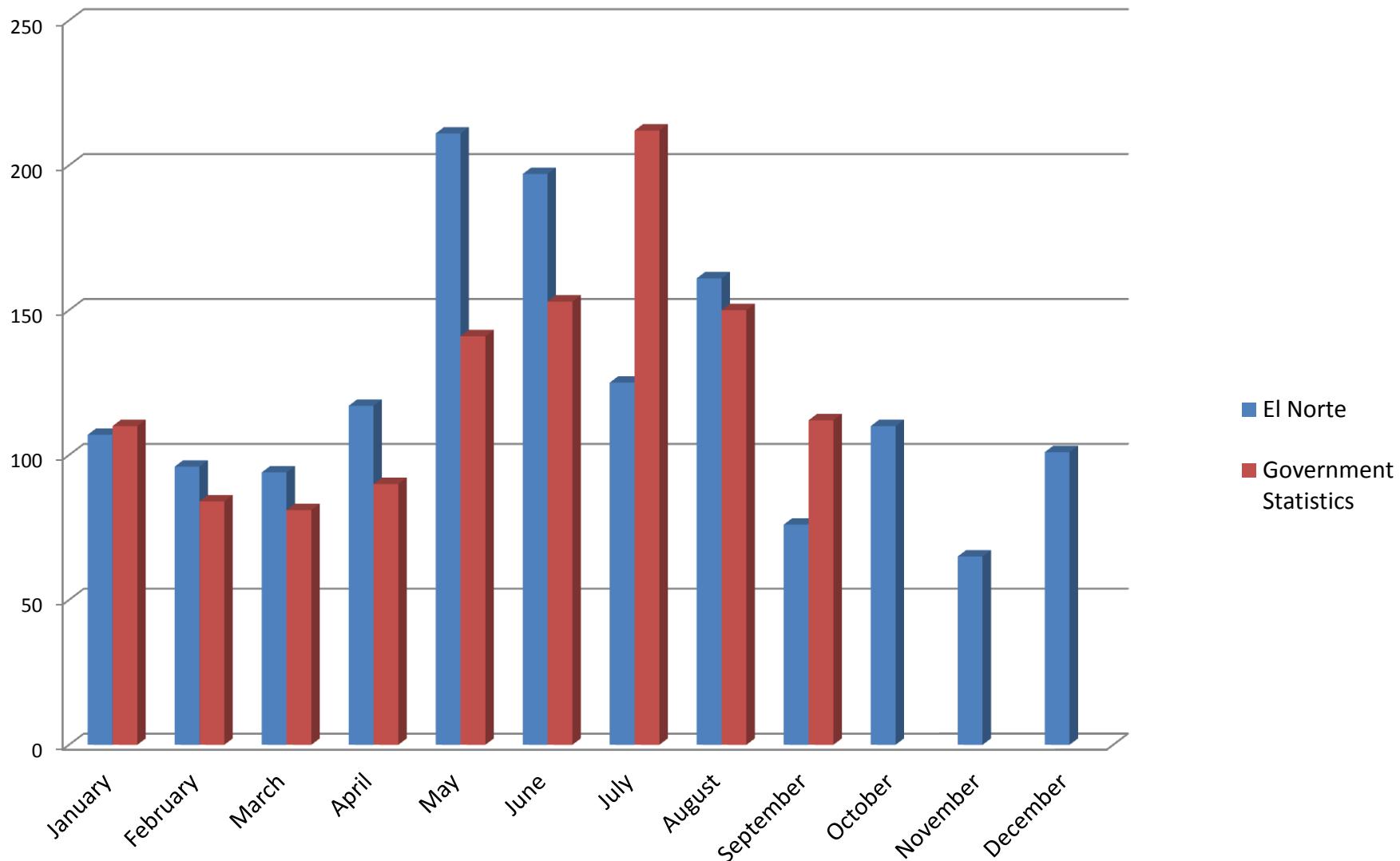


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



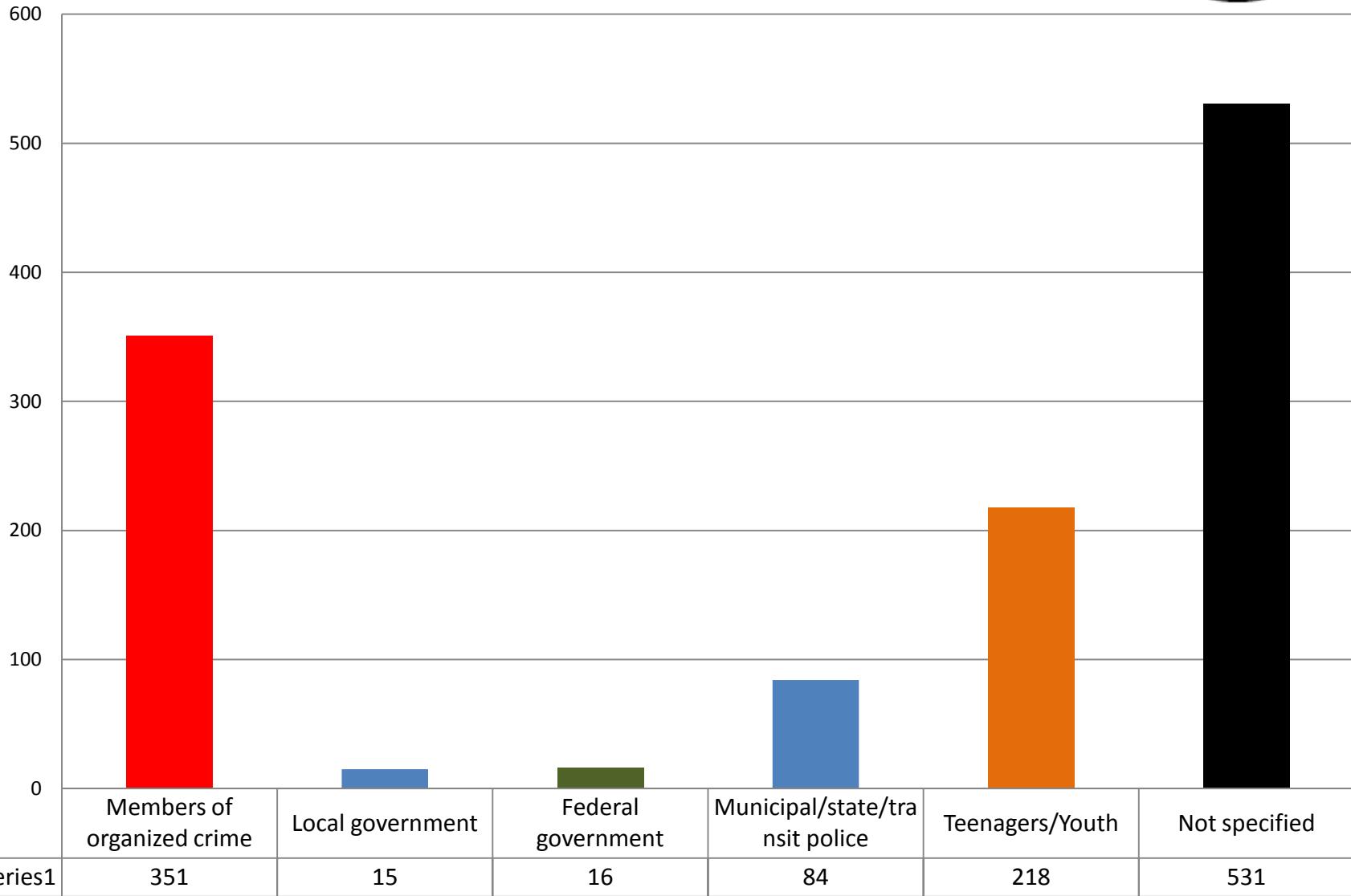


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- Monterrey endured a bloody year as two cartels, the Zetas and the Gulf Cartel, battled for control of this wealthy industrial and financial center.
- El Norte is considered among the country's best newspapers. Its reporting on the drug conflict is extensive and the outlet was among the few Mexican dailies monitored that provided context in news accounts and did follow-ups. El Norte enjoyed an engaged readership, which often commented at length at the end of stories on public safety. It also published a special section on deaths connected to organized crime. The outlet fully identified minors linked to organized crime activities. It reported on car accidents stemming from car chases between organized crime groups and the armed forces, which have taken over police duties.
- People supported and respected the federal forces which patrolled the city in 2011, according to the outlet. They were weary of local police, which were identified by readers as poliZe, tranZite and muniZipal, using the Z as a reference to the Zeta cartel.



## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet (continued):

- The outlet reported on so-called body rescues by cartels that stole bodies at crime scenes before police could identify them.
- Between 2010 to 2011 female homicides nearly tripled. In 70 percent of the cases the women were decapitated.
- Cartels increasingly used children 10 to 15 years old as lookouts and drug runners.
- Cartels retaliated against individual enemies by killing their entire family.

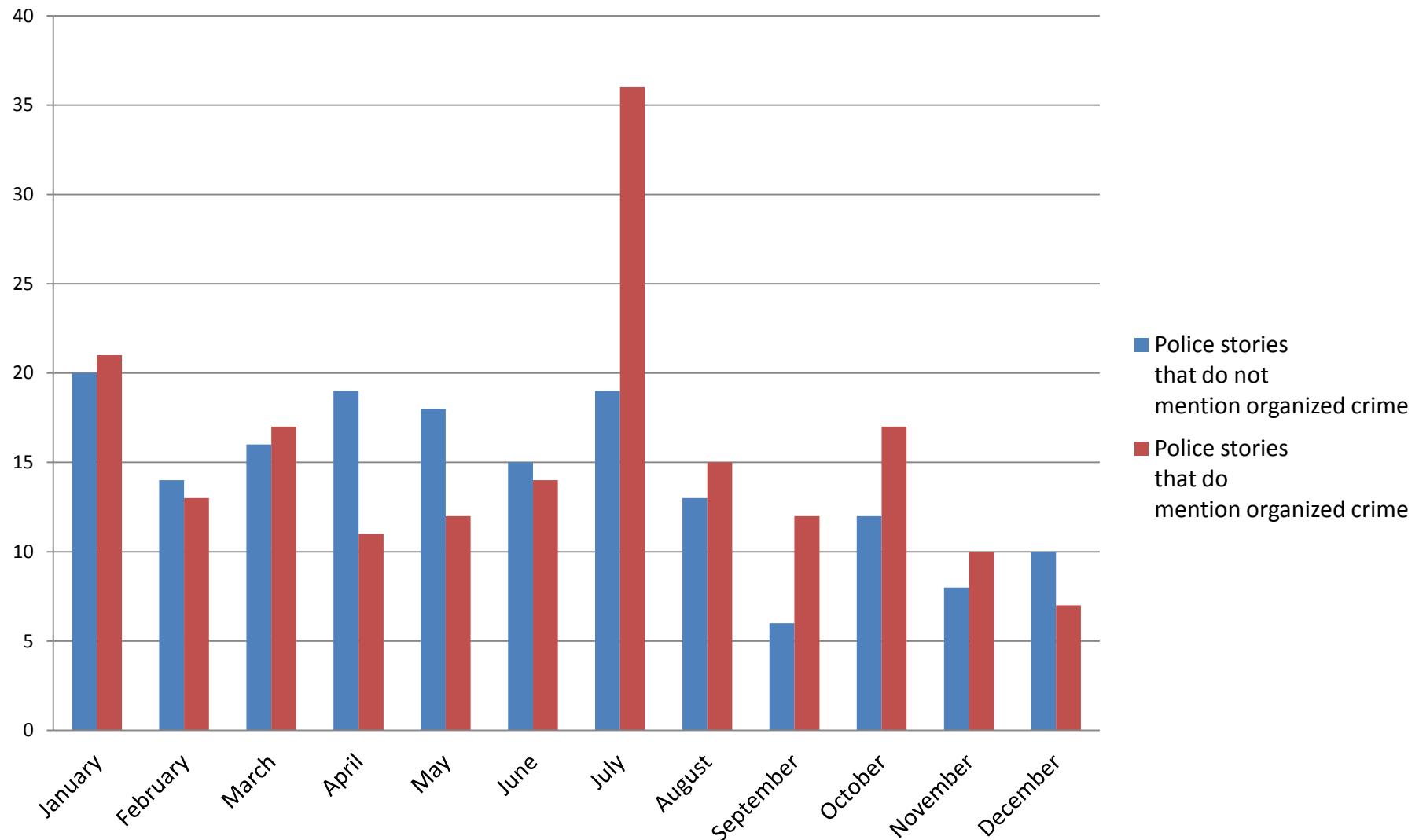


# JALAPA, VERACRUZ

*La Jornada*

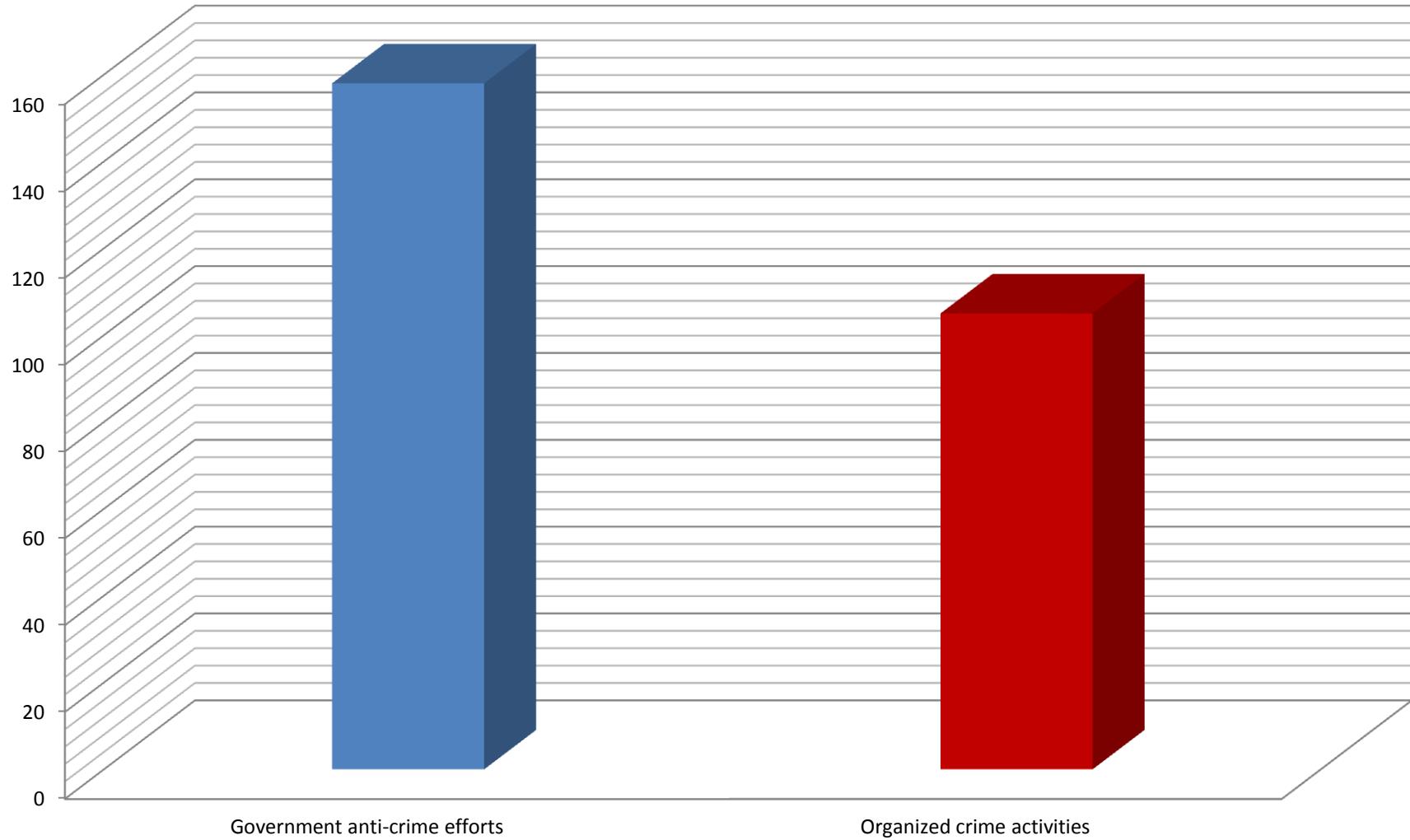


## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS



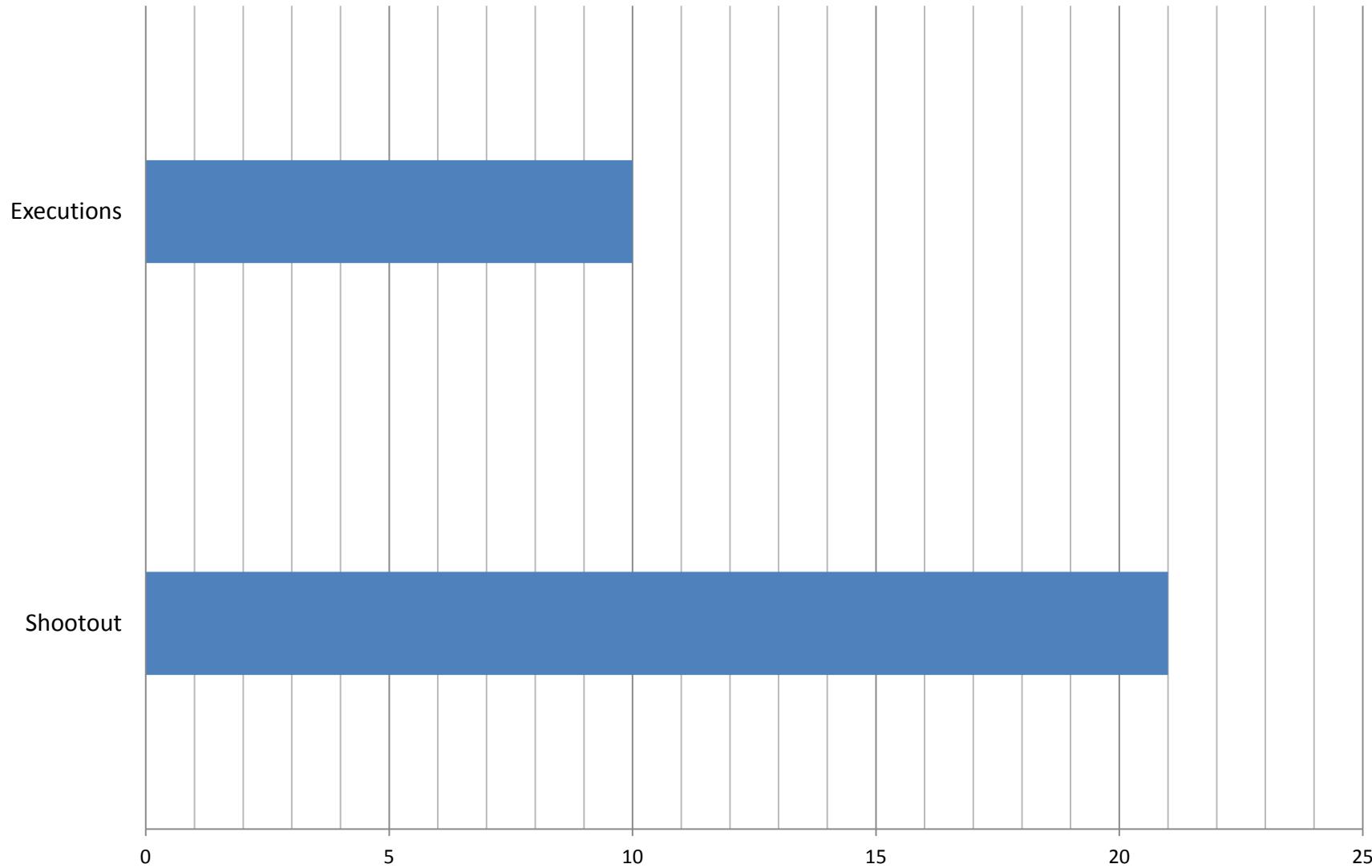


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



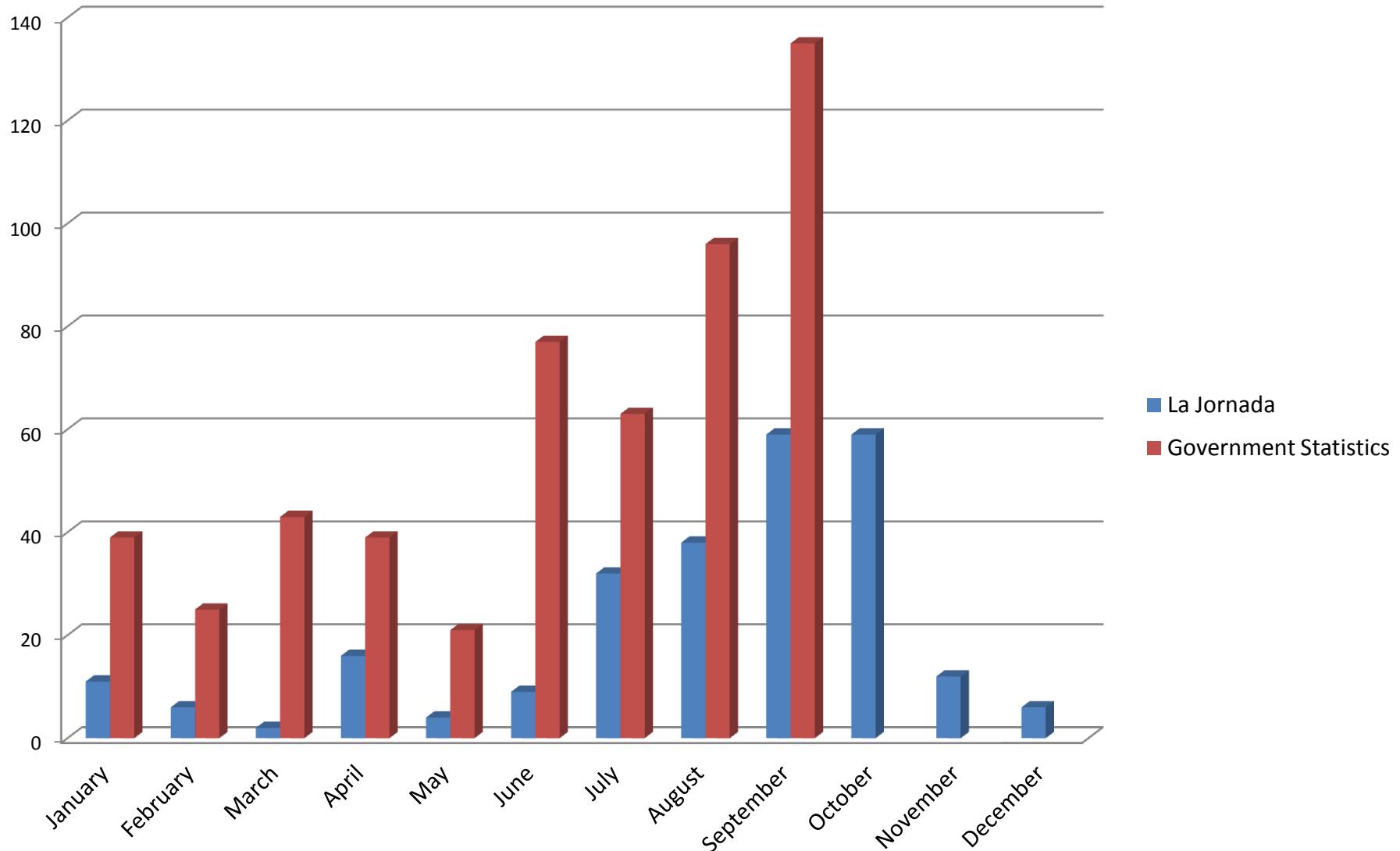


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



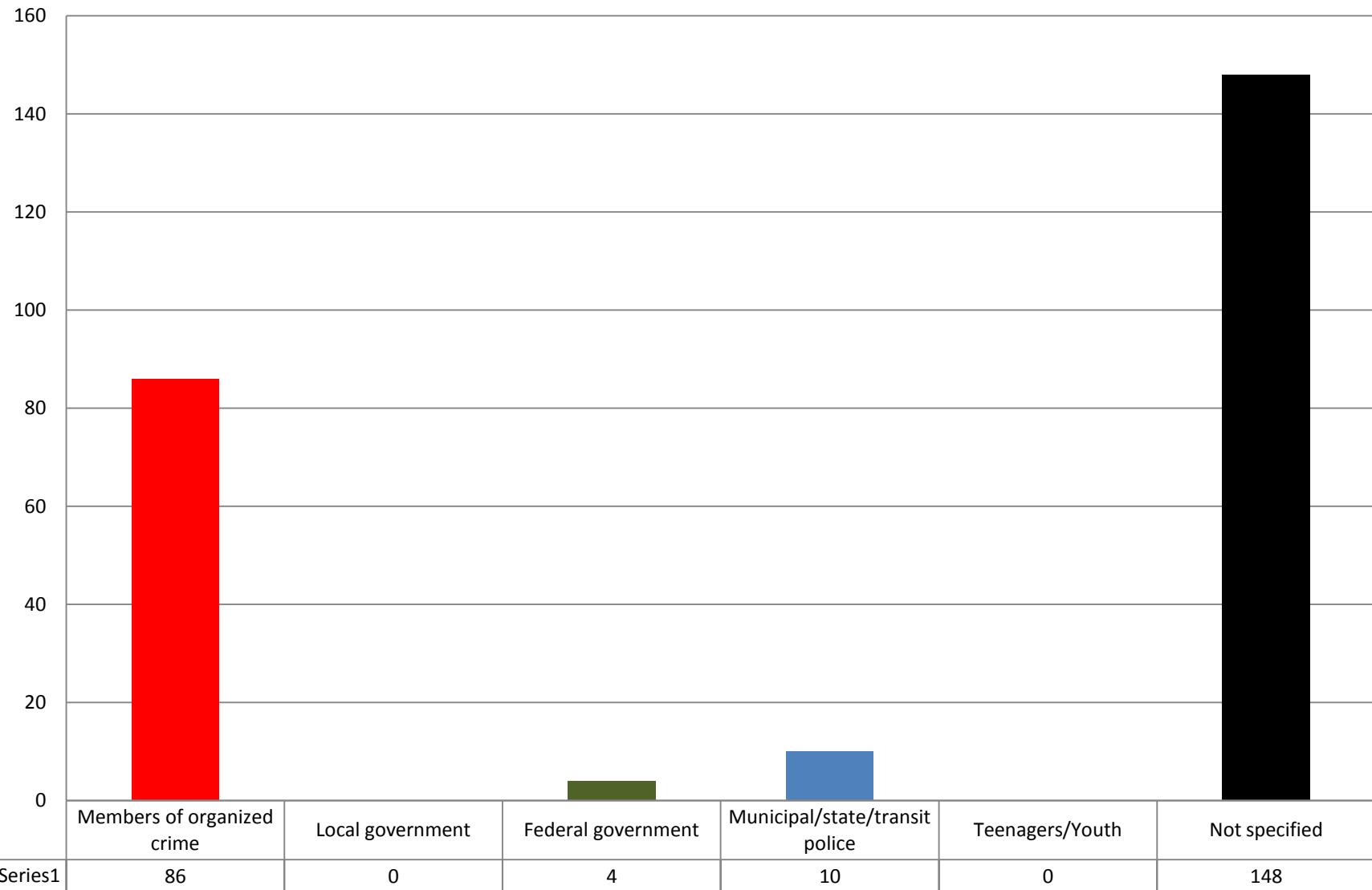


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- The year 2011 was among the most violent for the southern state of Veracruz and for its journalism community. Four journalists were targeted and killed by alleged organized crime hitmen.
- In 2010, MEPI monitored the daily *El Dictamen* based in Jalapa, Veracruz. For the second study, that daily had limited online reporting of crime. So for 2011 MEPI chose to monitor the regional version of the national daily *La Jornada*.
- During the first three months of 2011, the daily reported on an alarming growth in organized crime activity. According to journalists, the Zetas had held tight controls over the state for the last few years. But the arrival of the Mexican Navy, challenged that group's power base. The outlet reported that transit police colluded with the Zetas, and that human trafficking and livestock theft generated income for organized crime. The daily warned readers that criminal groups were recruiting youth as lookouts and campesinos to grow marijuana.

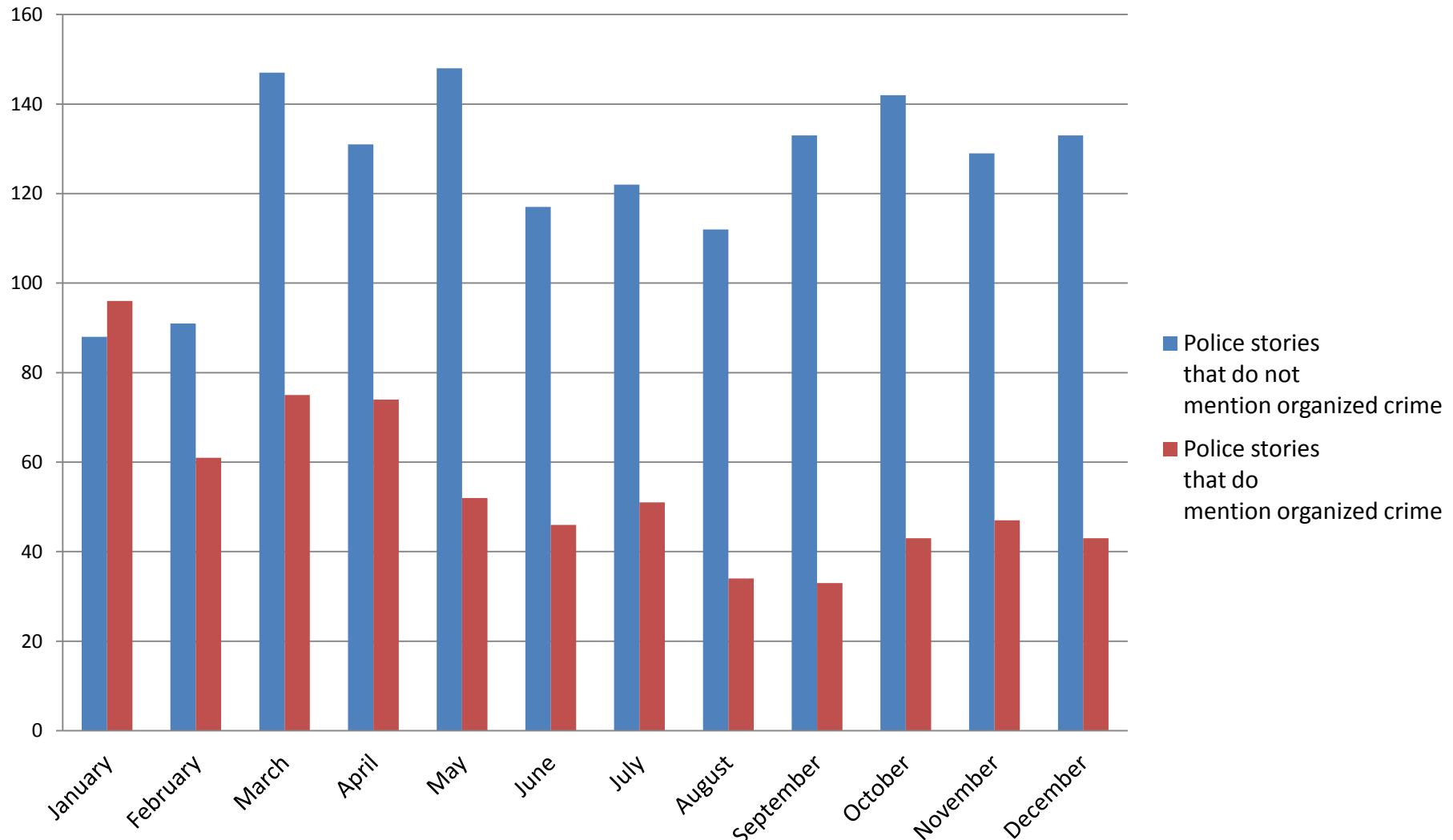


# CUERNAVACA, MORELOS

*El Diario de Morelos*

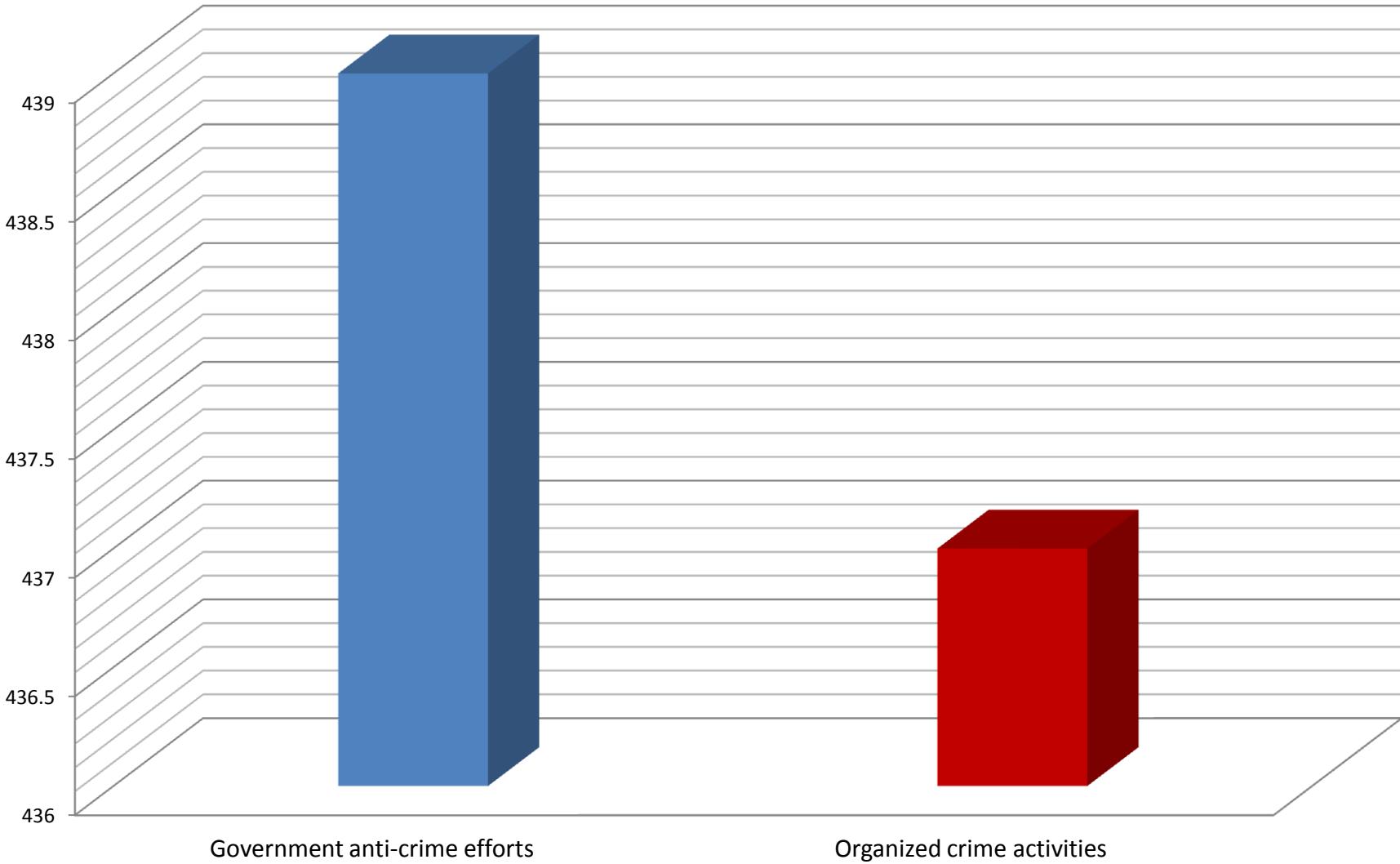


## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS EL DIARIO DE MORELOS



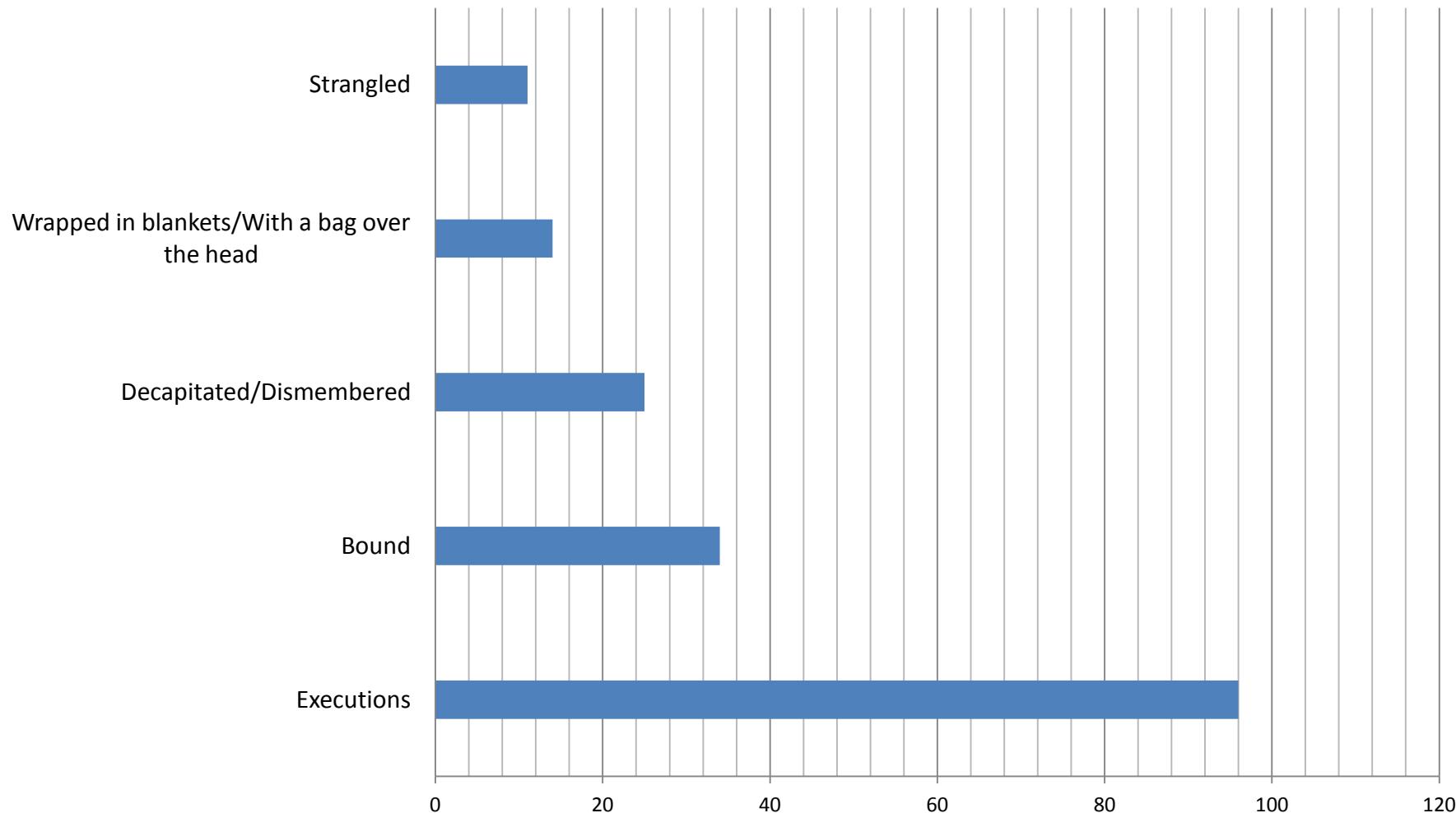


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



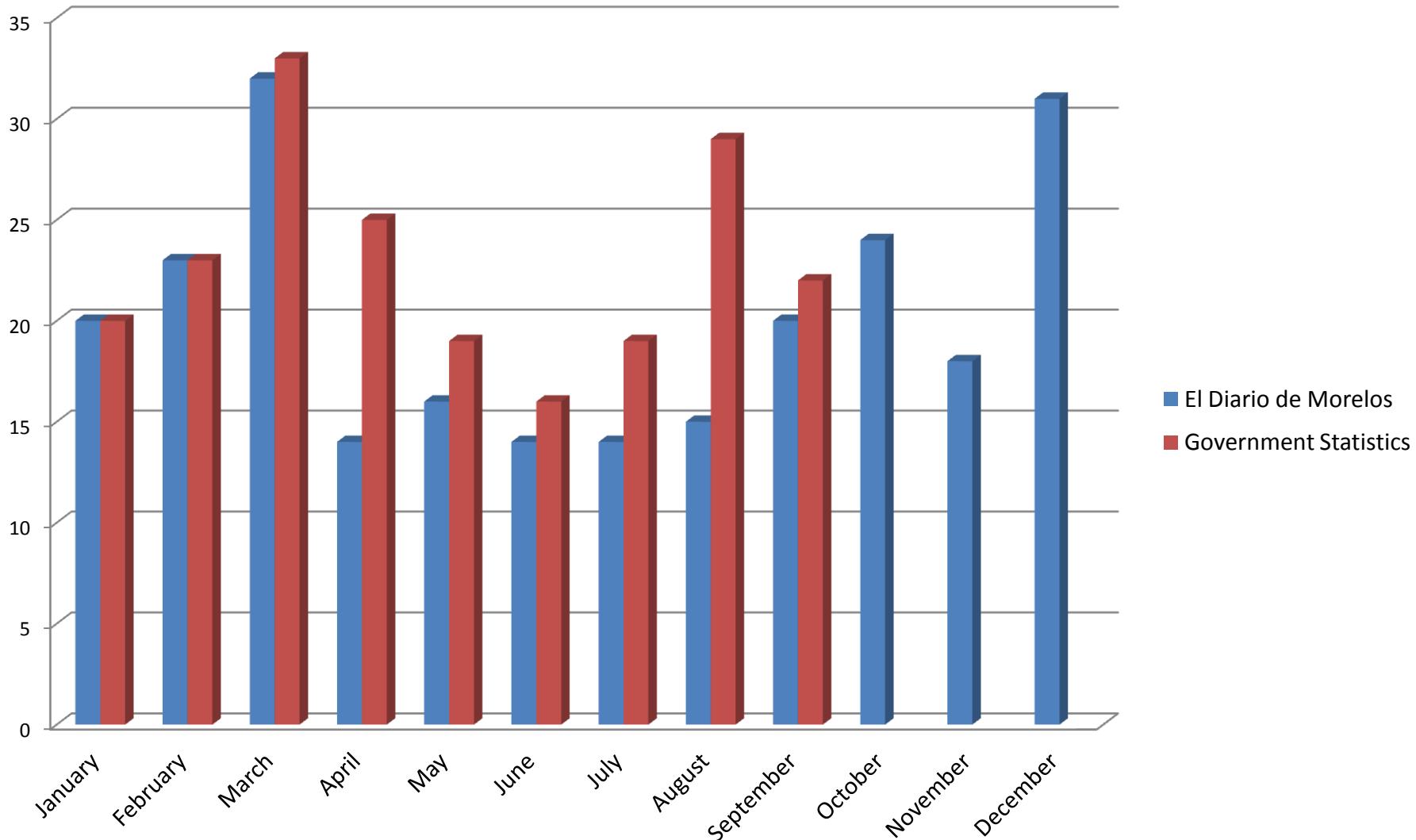


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



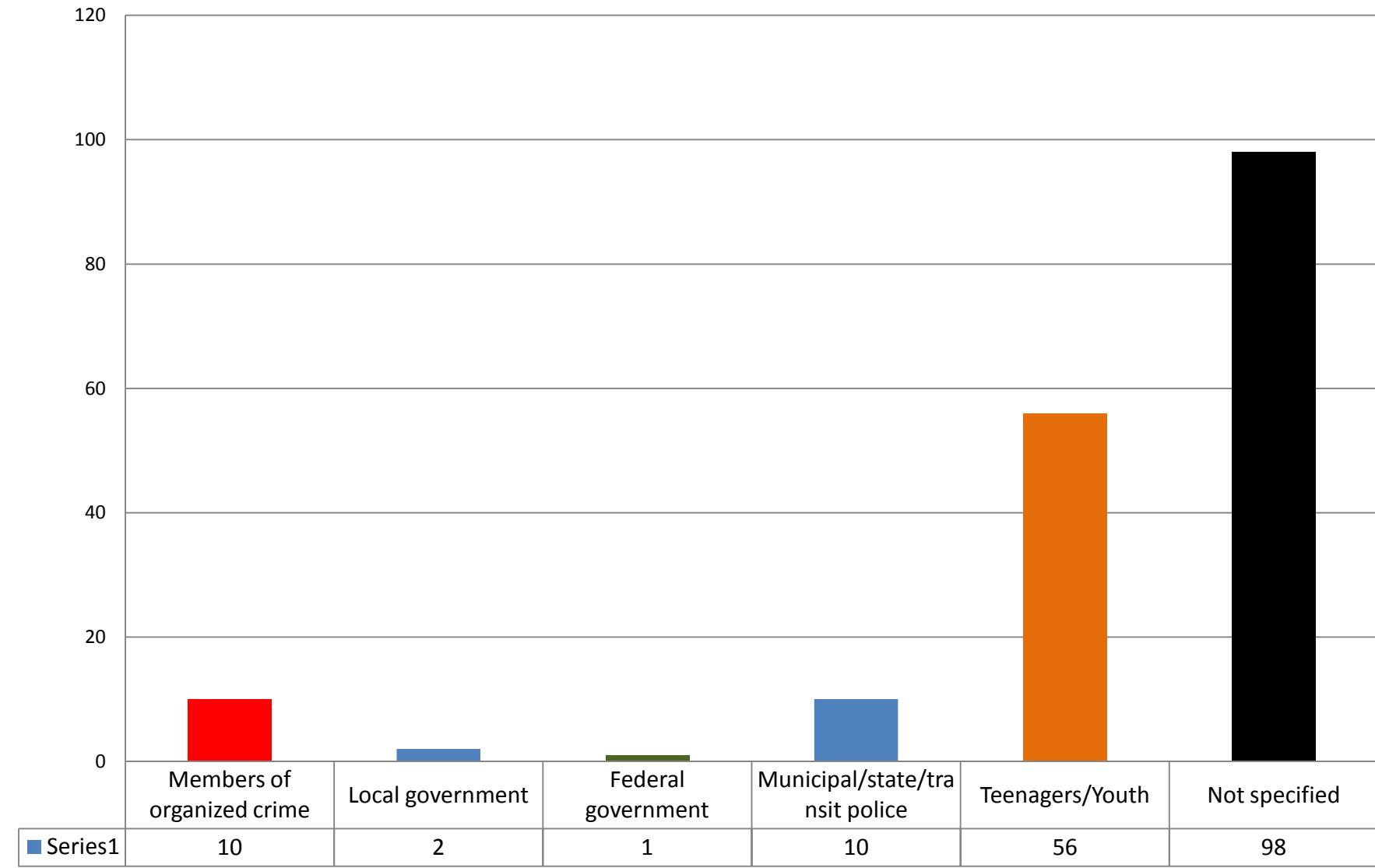


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- Morelos is a state that until 2010 had been controlled by the Beltran Leyva drug cartel. But with the takedown of the cartel's top leaders, the organization lost hegemony. Several other groups began fighting for control of the state. Morelos was one of the states where the MEPI study found that the presence of competing cartels benefitted press coverage. Without a single cartel exerting control, the media was able to operate more freely. *El Diario de Morelos* attempted to provide context to crime stories. It always quoted authorities in their articles. The daily explained turf battles among crime groups.
- The outlet published the content of narco messages, unlike most other dailies, and often detailed gruesome killings. About nine out of 10 executions included a narco message, commonly used by cartels to send messages to other organized crime groups. Organized crime lookouts developed sophisticated techniques such as the use of surveillance cameras to monitor drug territories.
- The daily wrote stories about organized criminals mocking authorities.

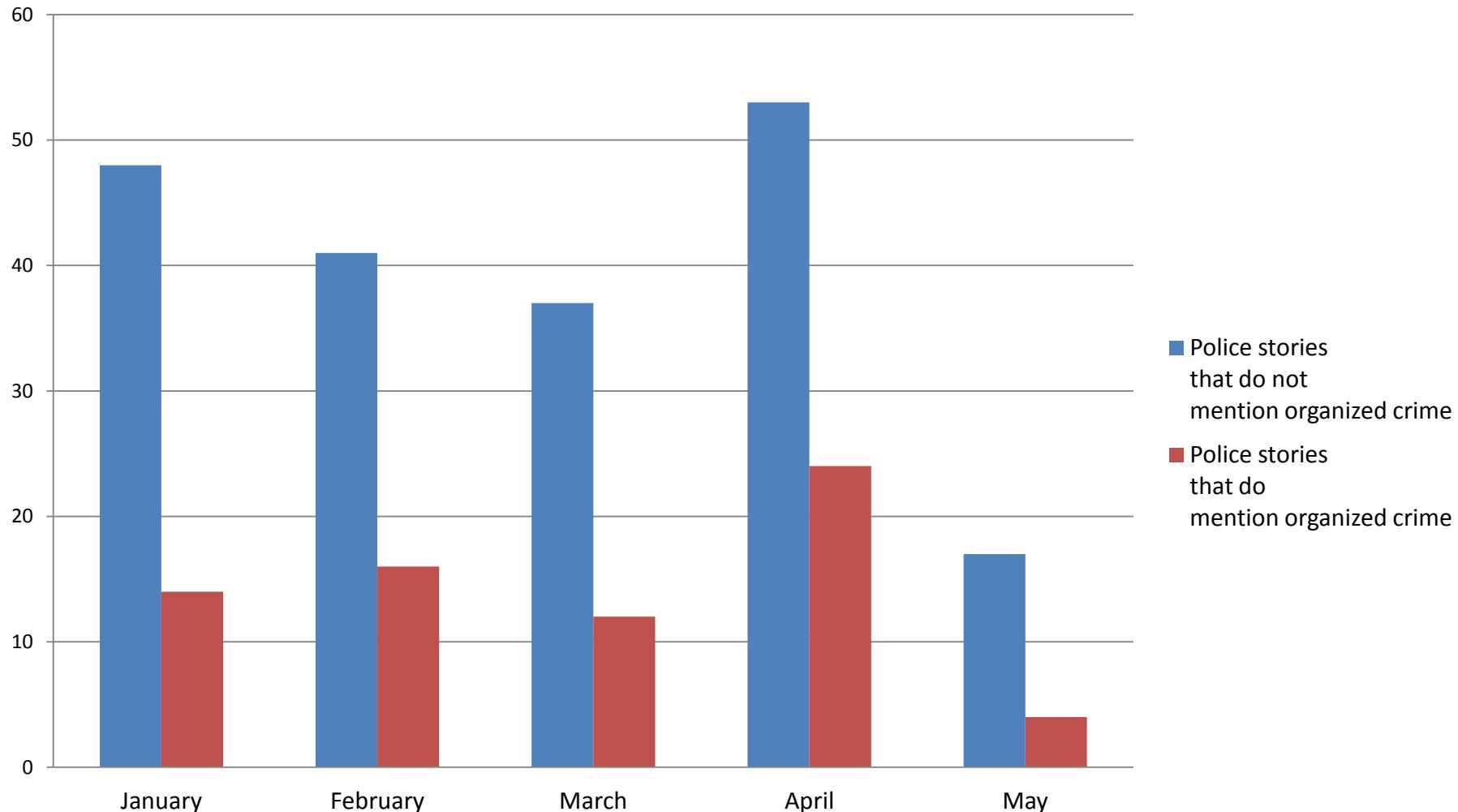


# AGUASCALIENTES, AGUASCALIENTES

*El Sol de Aguascalientes*



## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS EL SOL DE AGUASCALIENTES

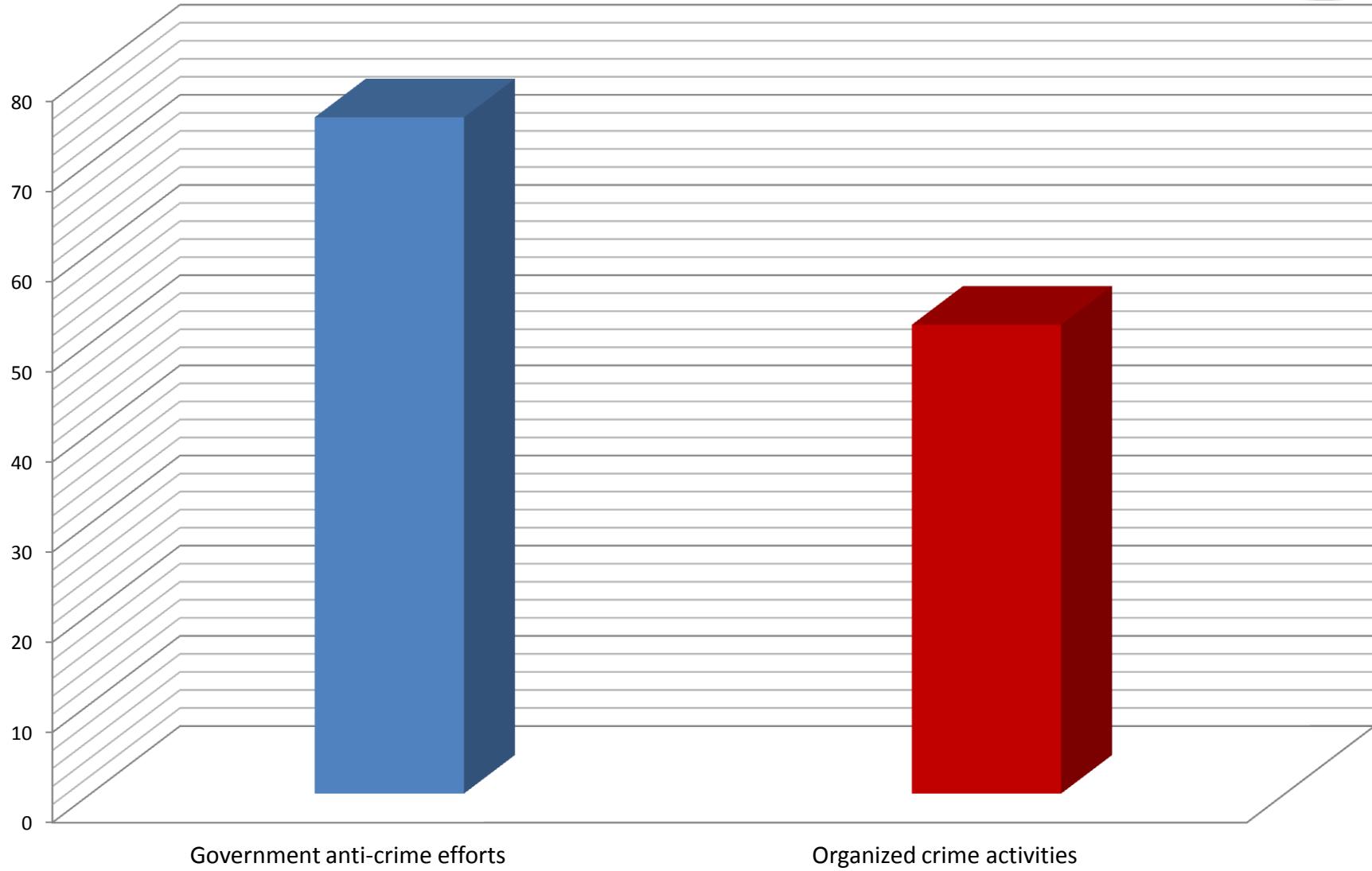


\*Only 5 months

Tecnológico de Monterrey,  
Mexico City Campus

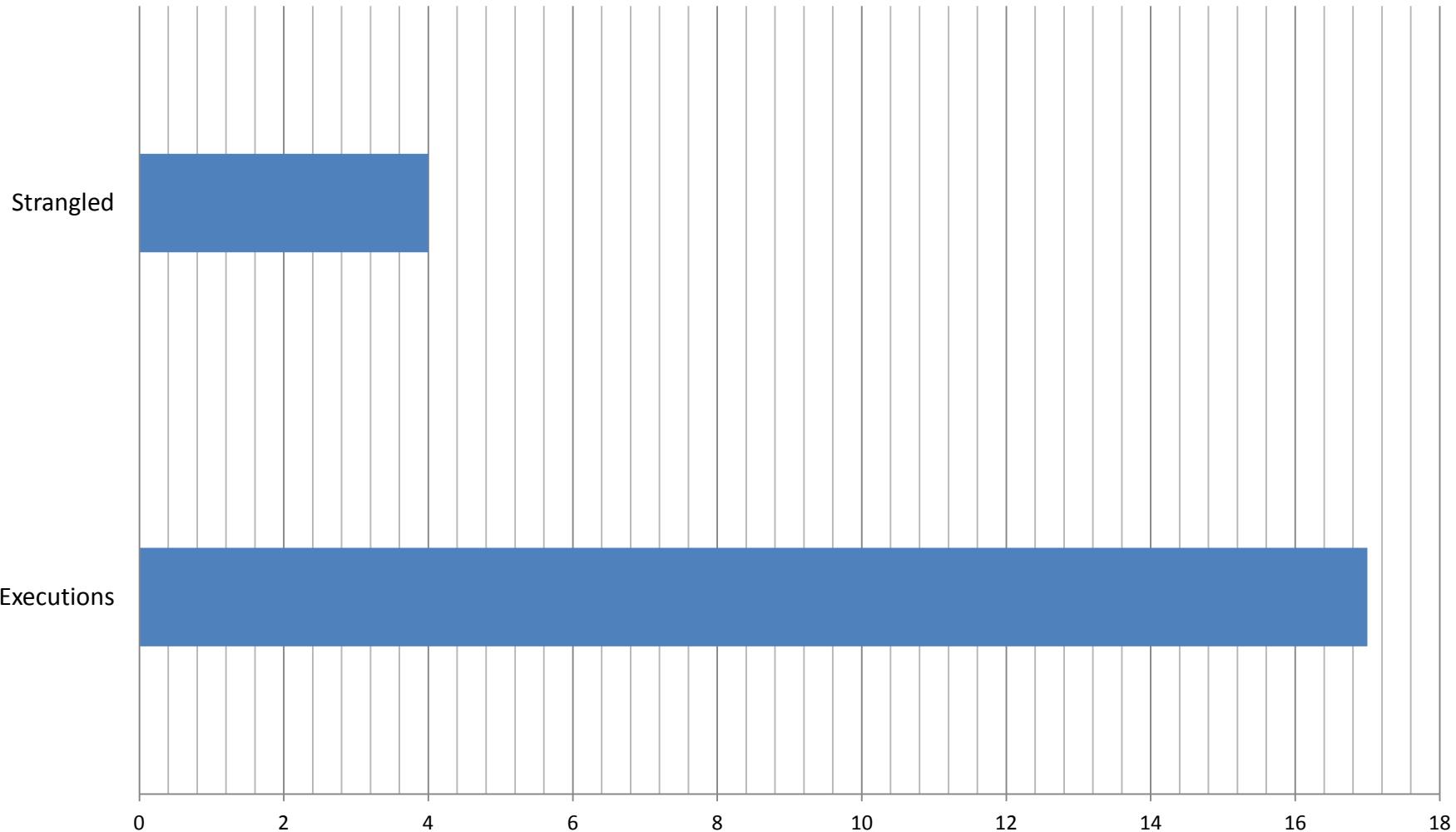
\*\*According to crime stories

## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



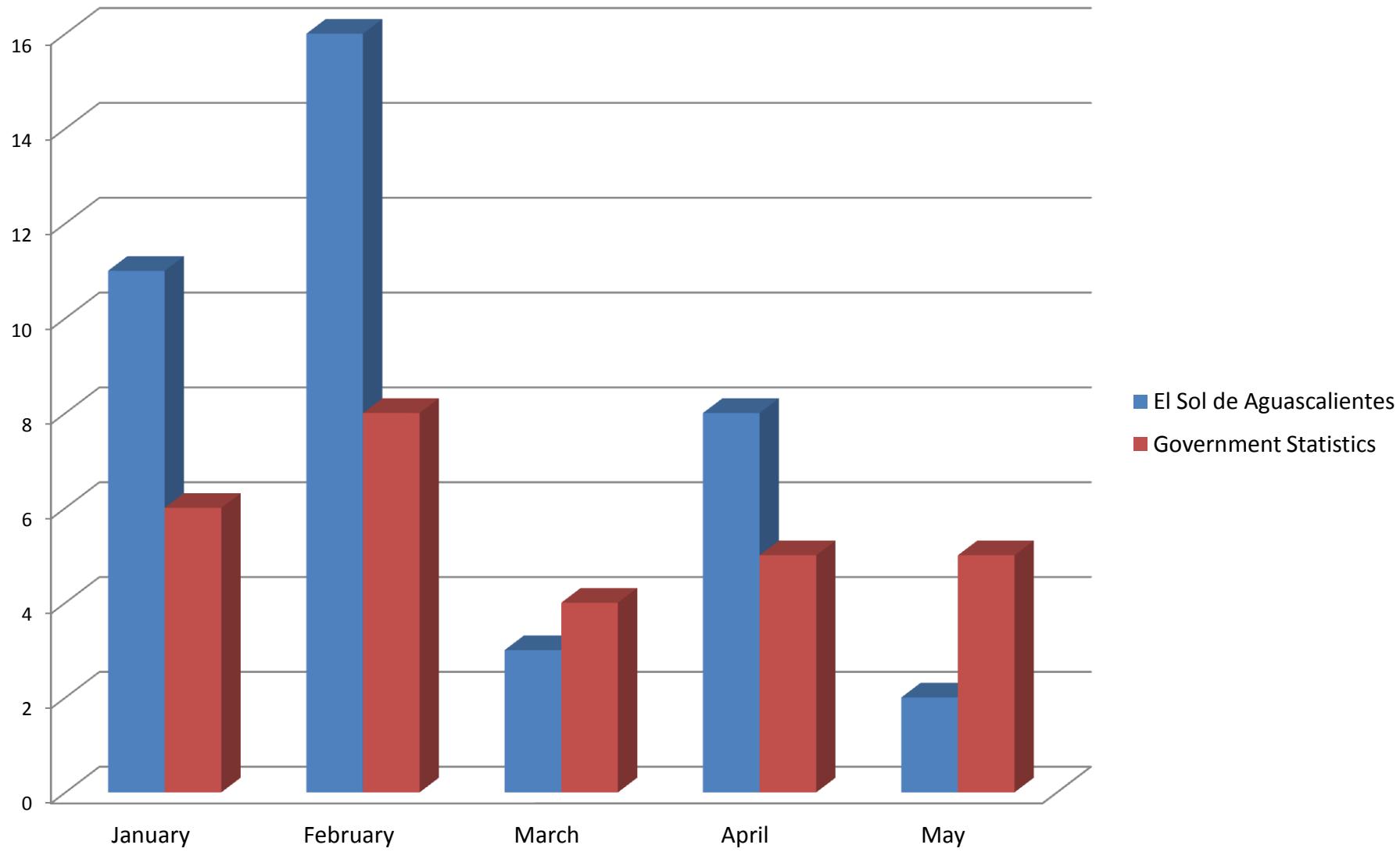


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



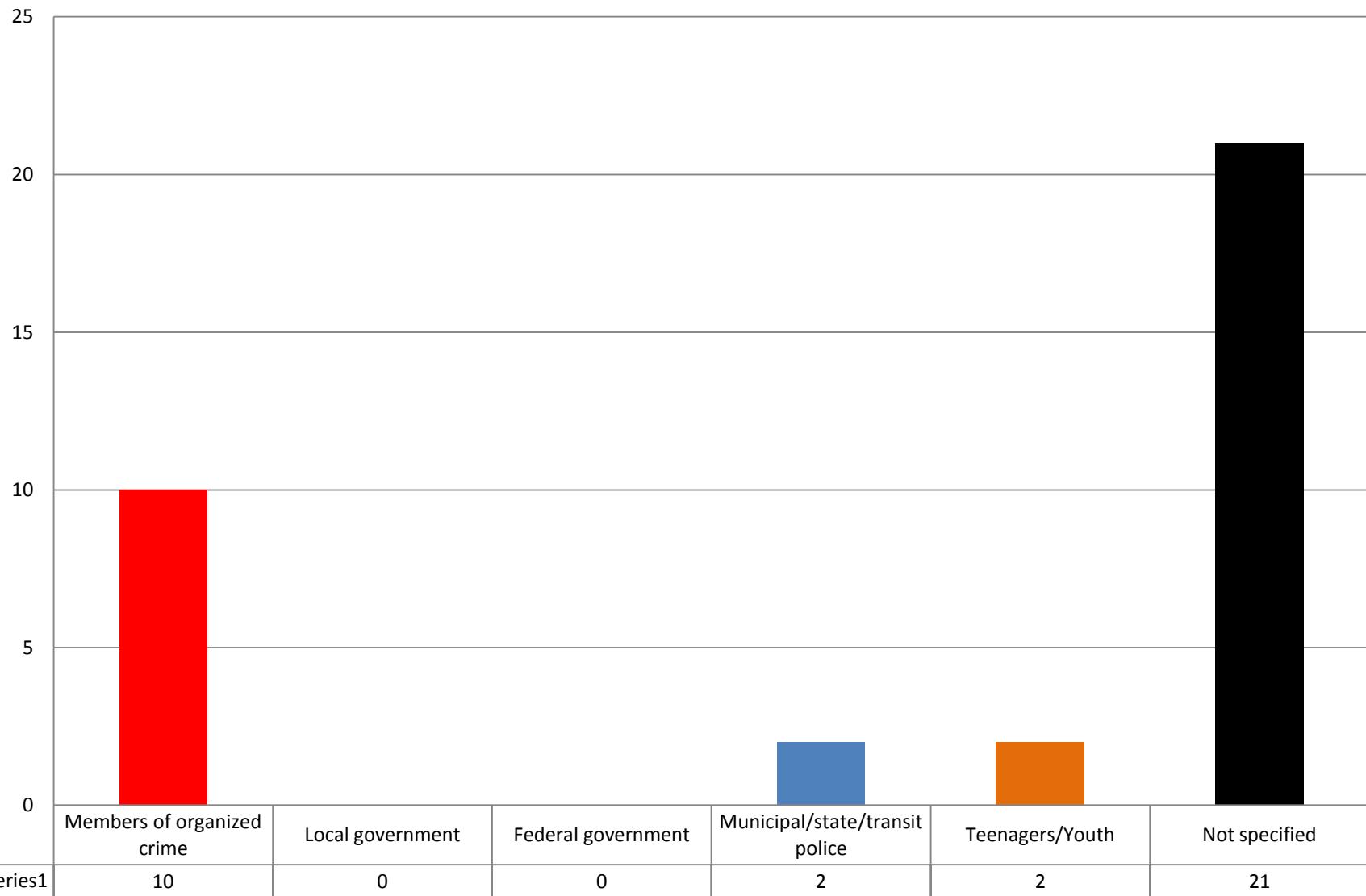


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- *El Sol de Aguascalientes* named the Zetas cartel in their stories and said the group was fighting with another criminal organization. La Familia Michoacana has been identified by Mexican federal forces as having some control in this state. But the daily never mentioned them.
- As in other states where the Zetas or the Familia Michoacana wielded some control, the press reported more on government anti-crime efforts.
- The daily included narco messages in their stories and employed language used by narcos to describe guns and types of crimes, such as “levanton,” which means kidnapping.
- The daily reported that organized crime often recruited children as young as 15 years old.

FUNDACIÓN

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DE PERIODISMO  
DE INVESTIGACIÓN

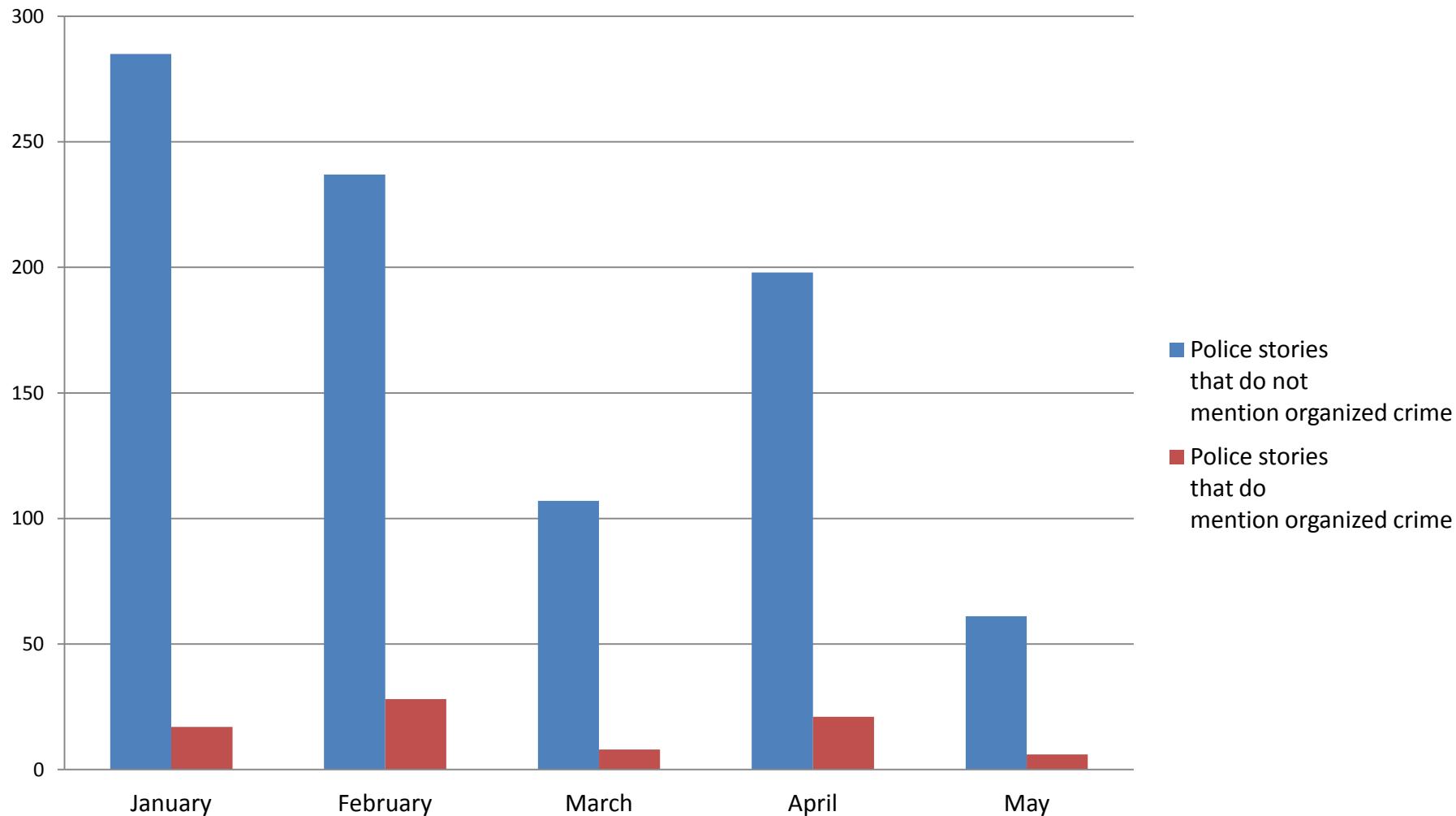


# PACHUCA, HIDALGO

*El Sol de Hidalgo*



## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS EL SOL DE HIDALGO



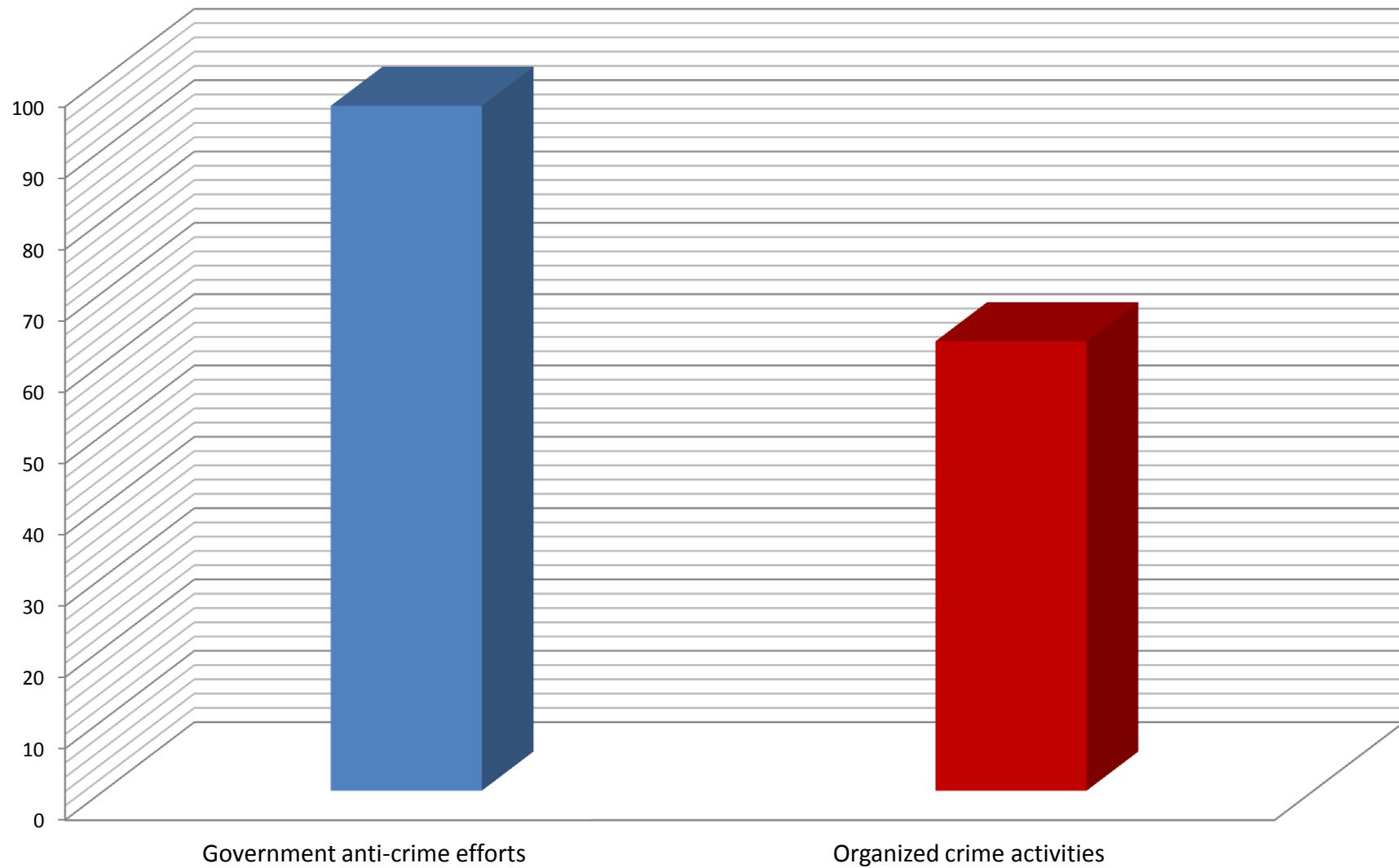
\*Only 5 months

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Mexico City Campus

\*\*According to crime stories

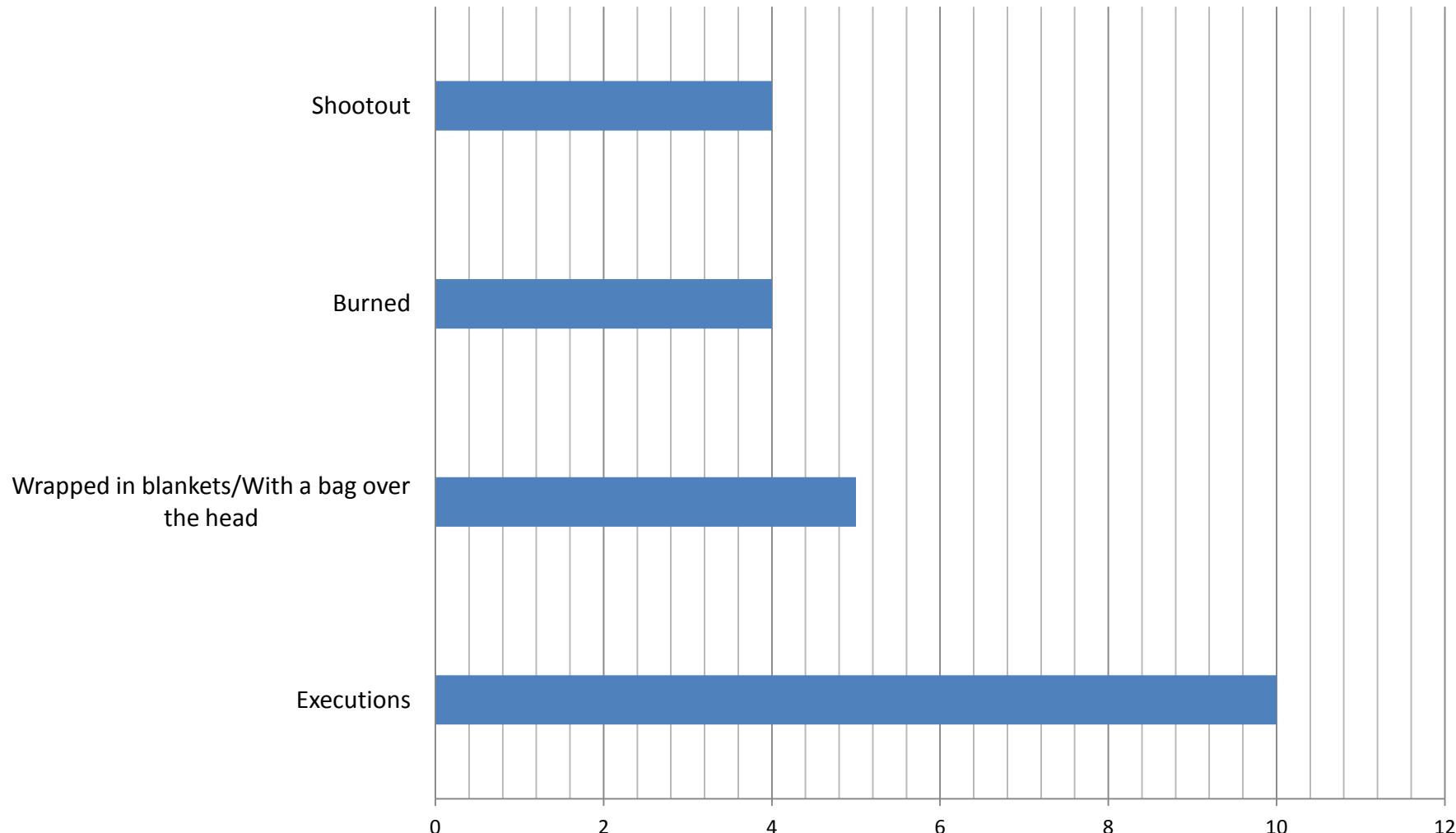


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



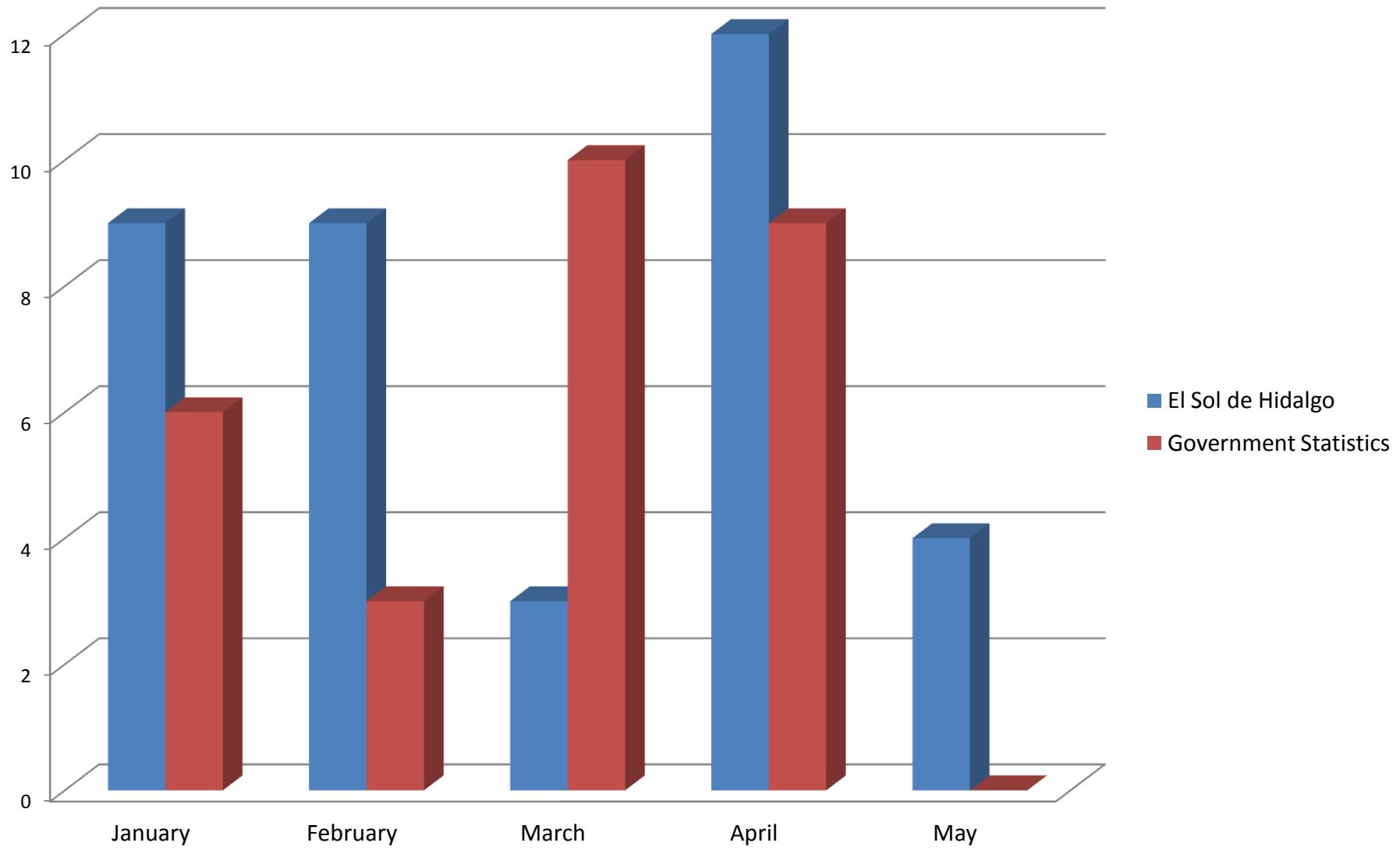


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



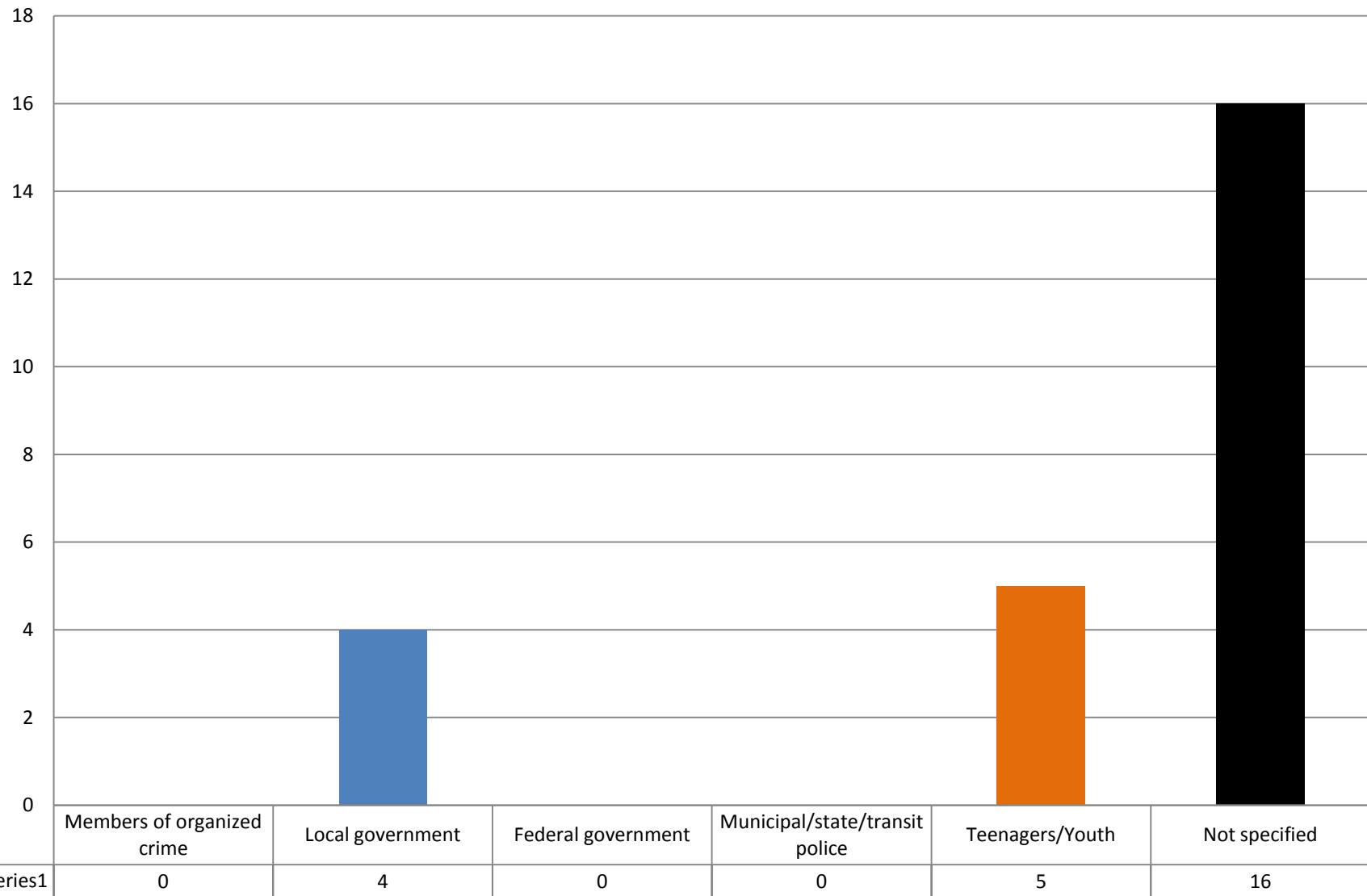


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## **Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:**

- Hidalgo is a state where the Zetas held control of most drug trafficking routes.
- The outlet did not use narco language, such as “levanton” (kidnapping) but preferred the word “desaparicion.”
- The daily wrote about prostitution rings, which they downplayed by identifying them as escort services. Prostitution is largely controlled by the Zetas, according to national sex workers union.
- The outlet also wrote about contraband and piracy, important revenue generating activities for organized crime.
- The daily rarely quoted officials in their crime stories.

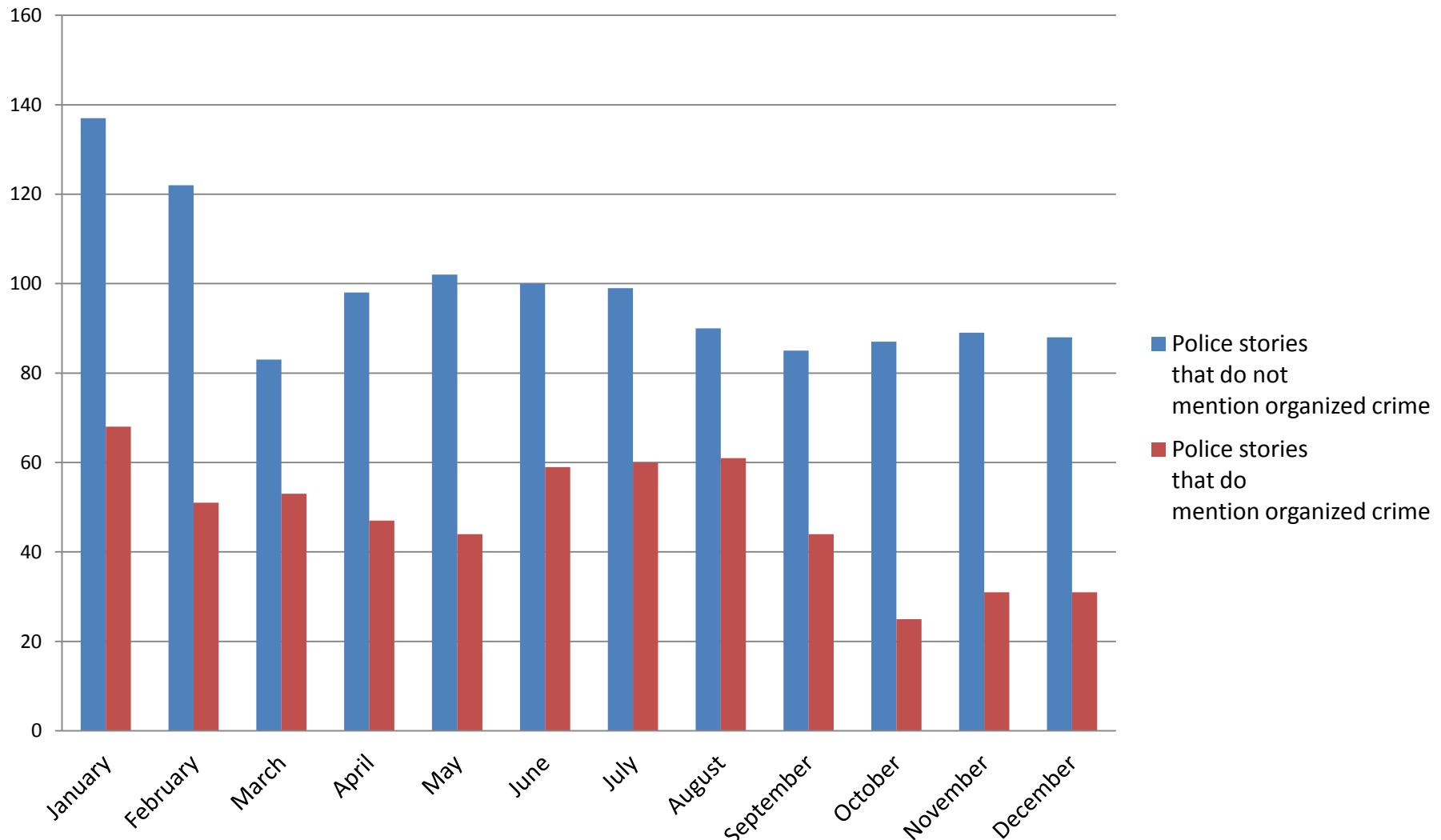


# MORELIA, MICHOACÁN

*La Voz de Michoacán*

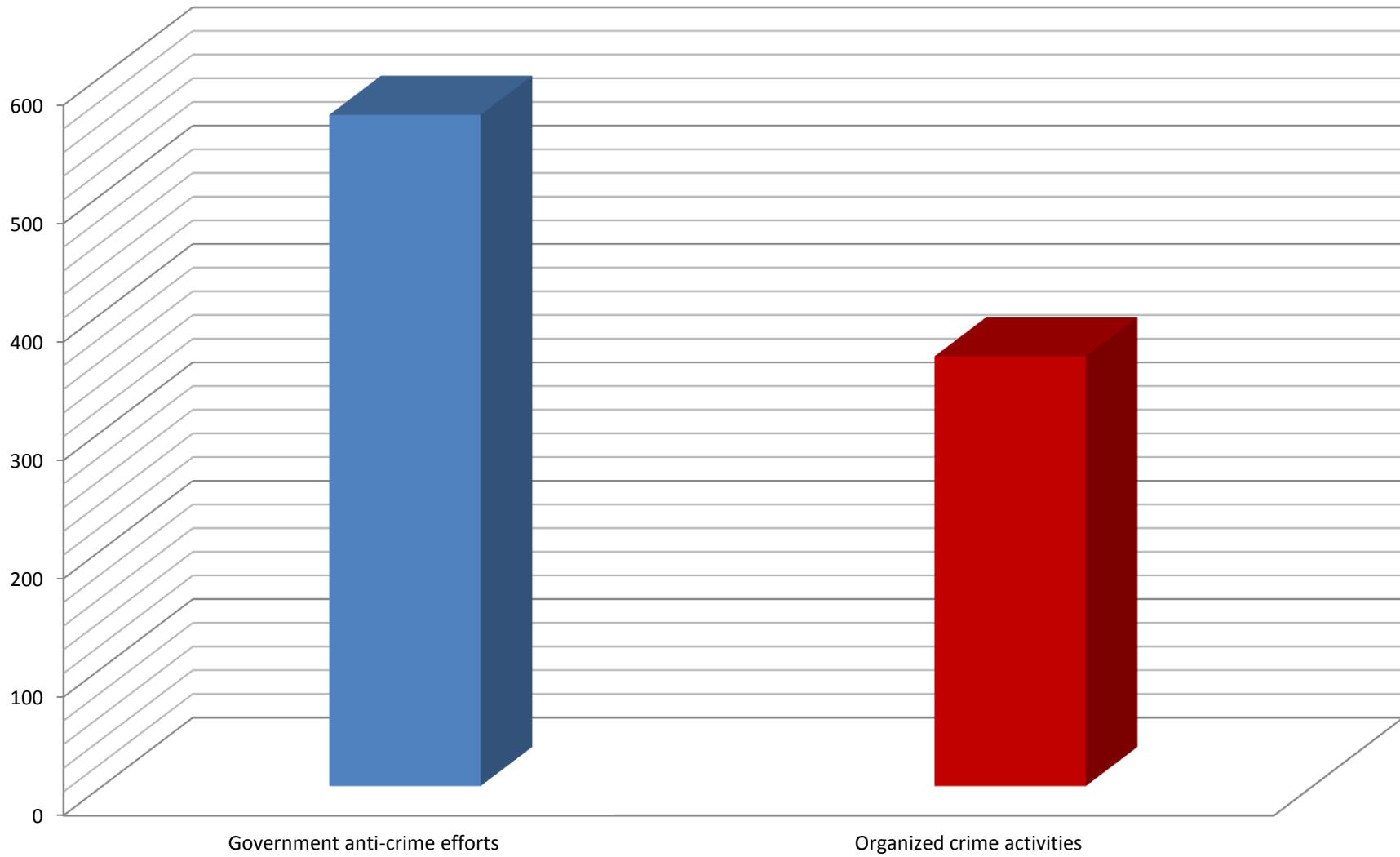


## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS LA VOZ DE MICHOACÁN



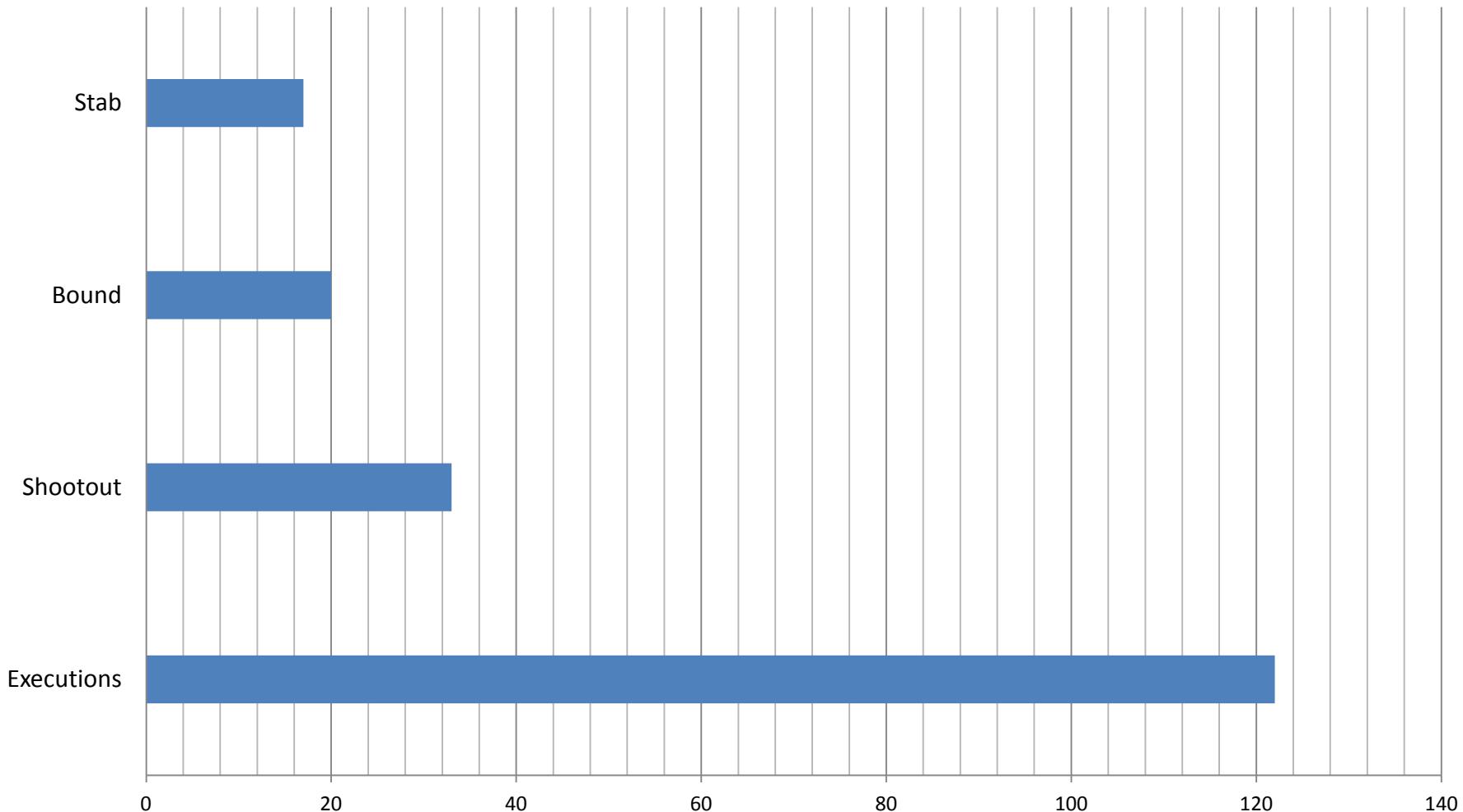


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



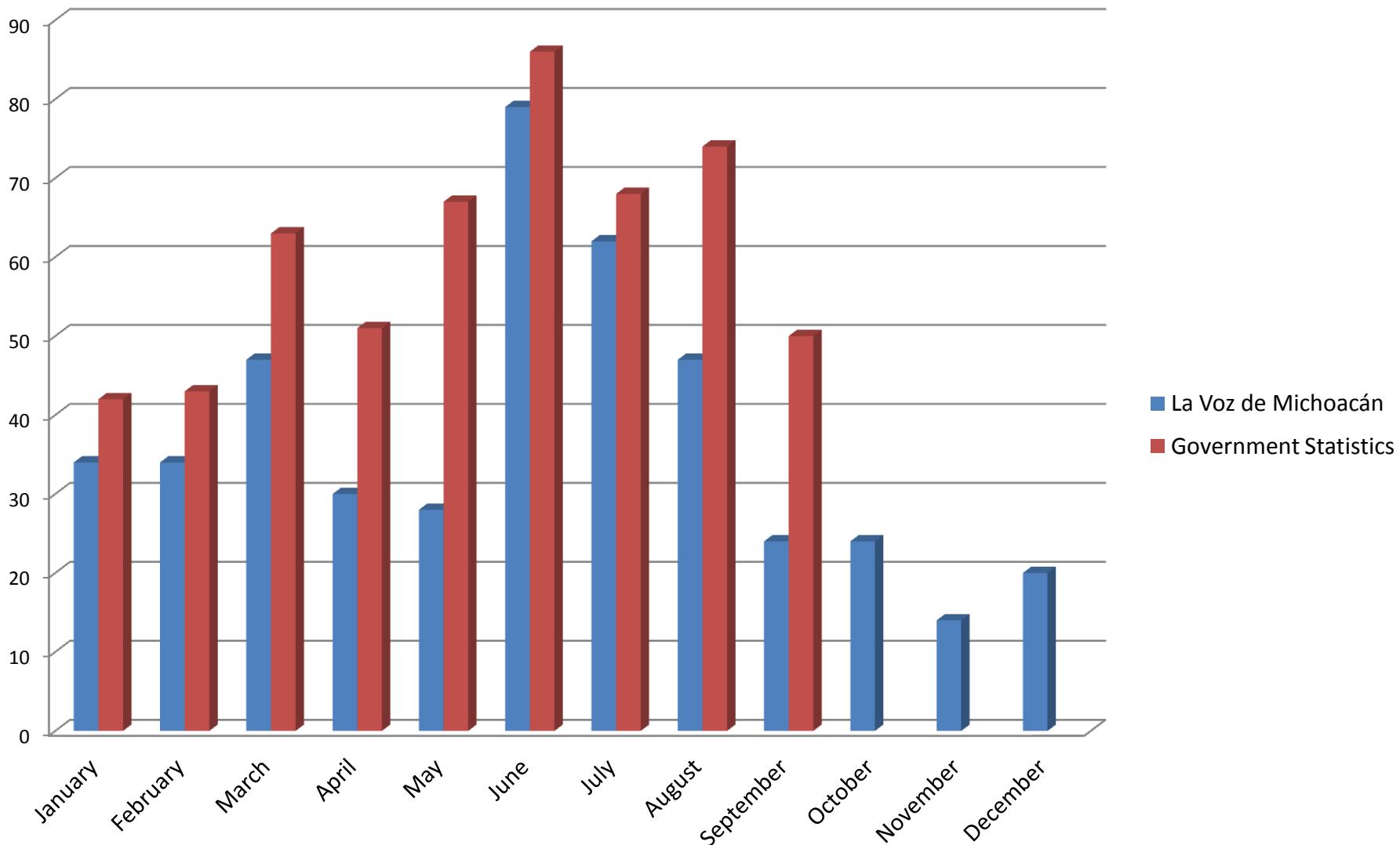


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS





## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- Michoacan is state that is widely controlled by La Familia Michoacana and its splinter group the Knights Templars. However, *La Voz de Michoacan*, never named either group in its daily crime stories. It did not provide context to crime incidents or draw obvious conclusions about crime patterns.
- Like other states where one cartel dominated the territory, most crime stories focused on government anti-crime efforts. The newspaper based its reports on military and federal police bulletins. Few stories cited local or state police.
- Extortion had been a serious problem in this state for the last few years. However, the extortion antics seemed to have escalated and victims were now forced to hand over titles to land and other real estate property.
- The state is considered dangerous by the Mexican Red Cross, which employed conflict zone procedures while operating in the state.
- All stories had bylines. Photographs were graphic.

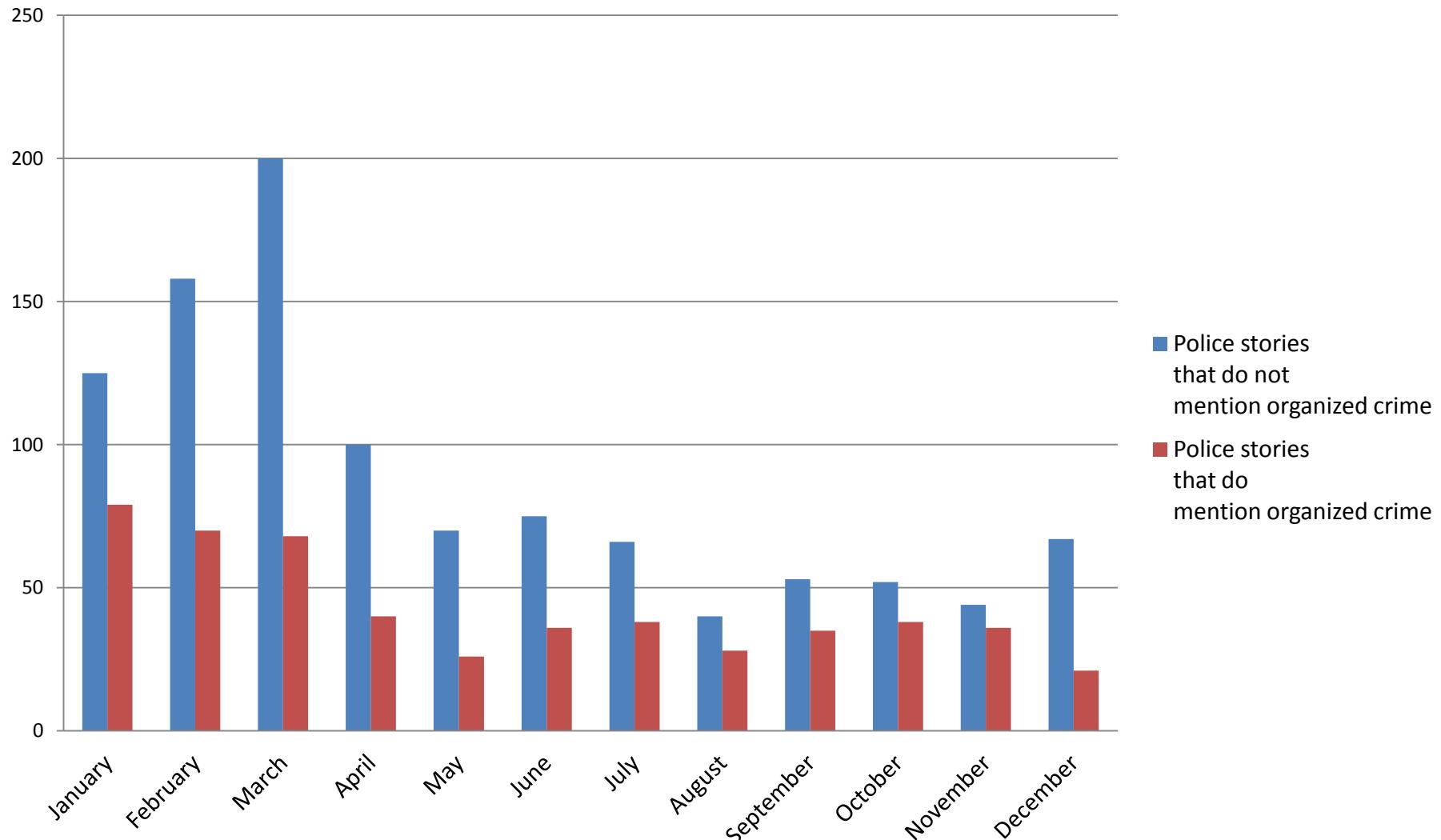


# HERMOSILLO, SONORA

*El Imparcial*

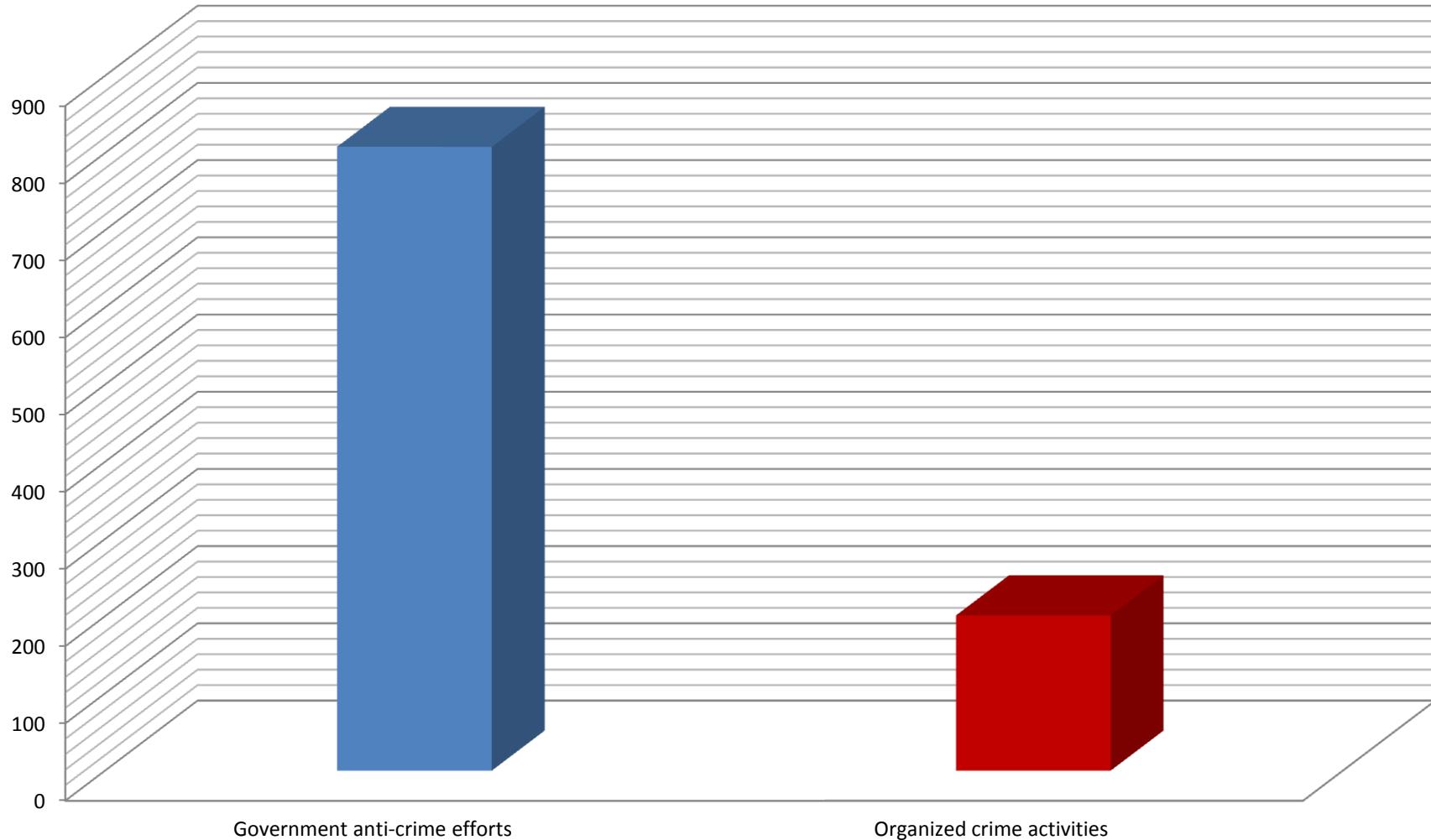


## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS EL IMPARCIAL



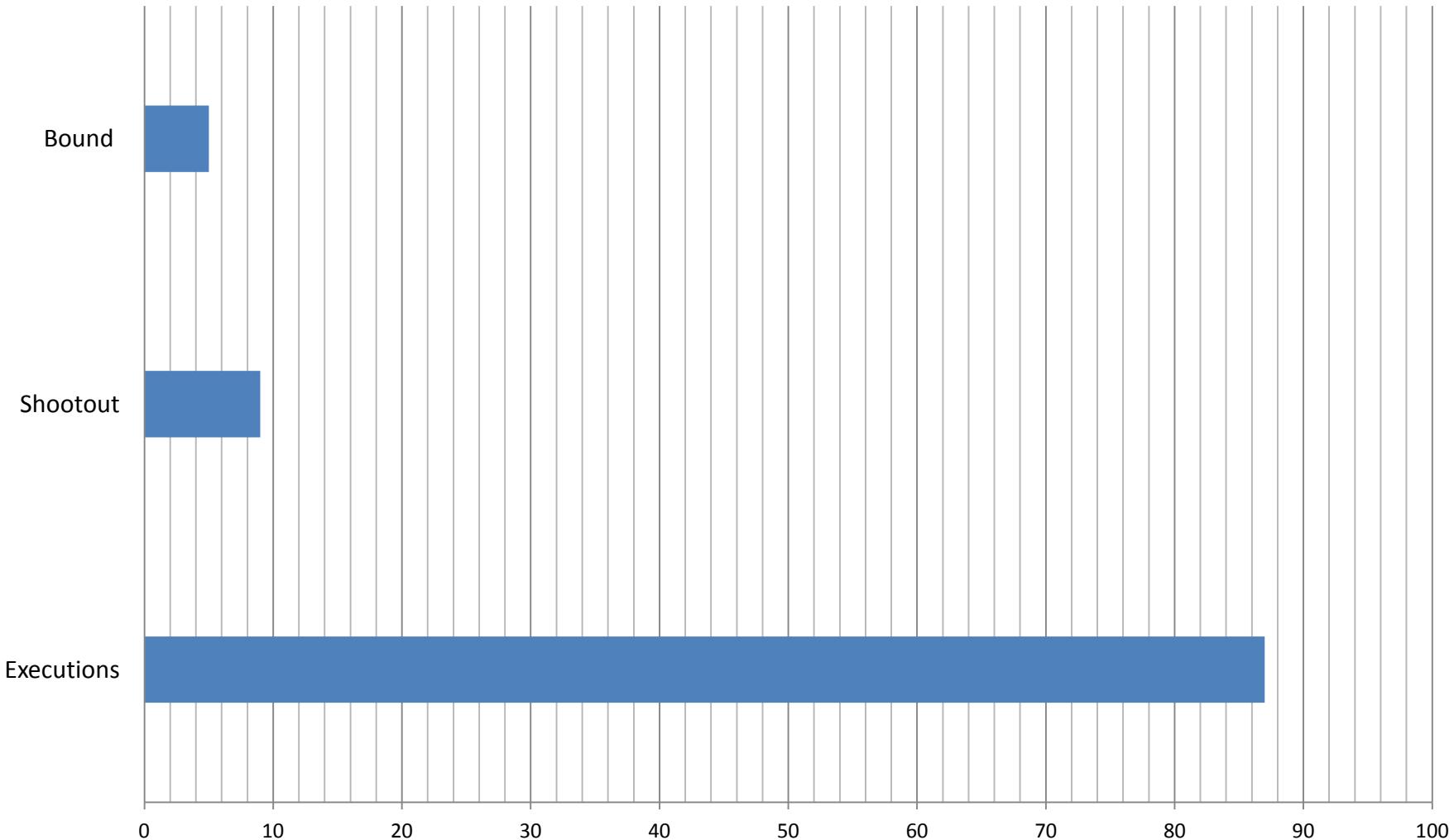


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



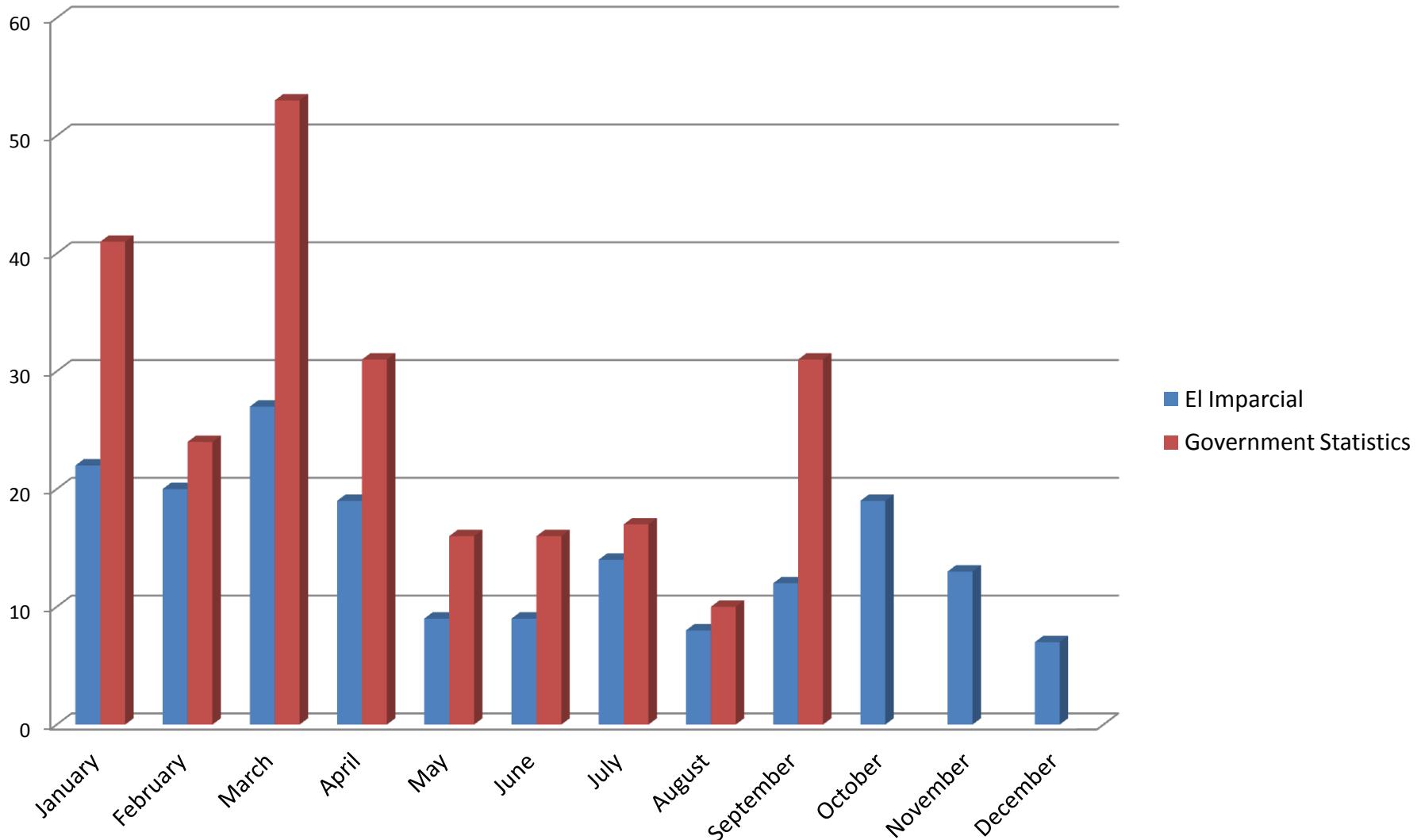


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



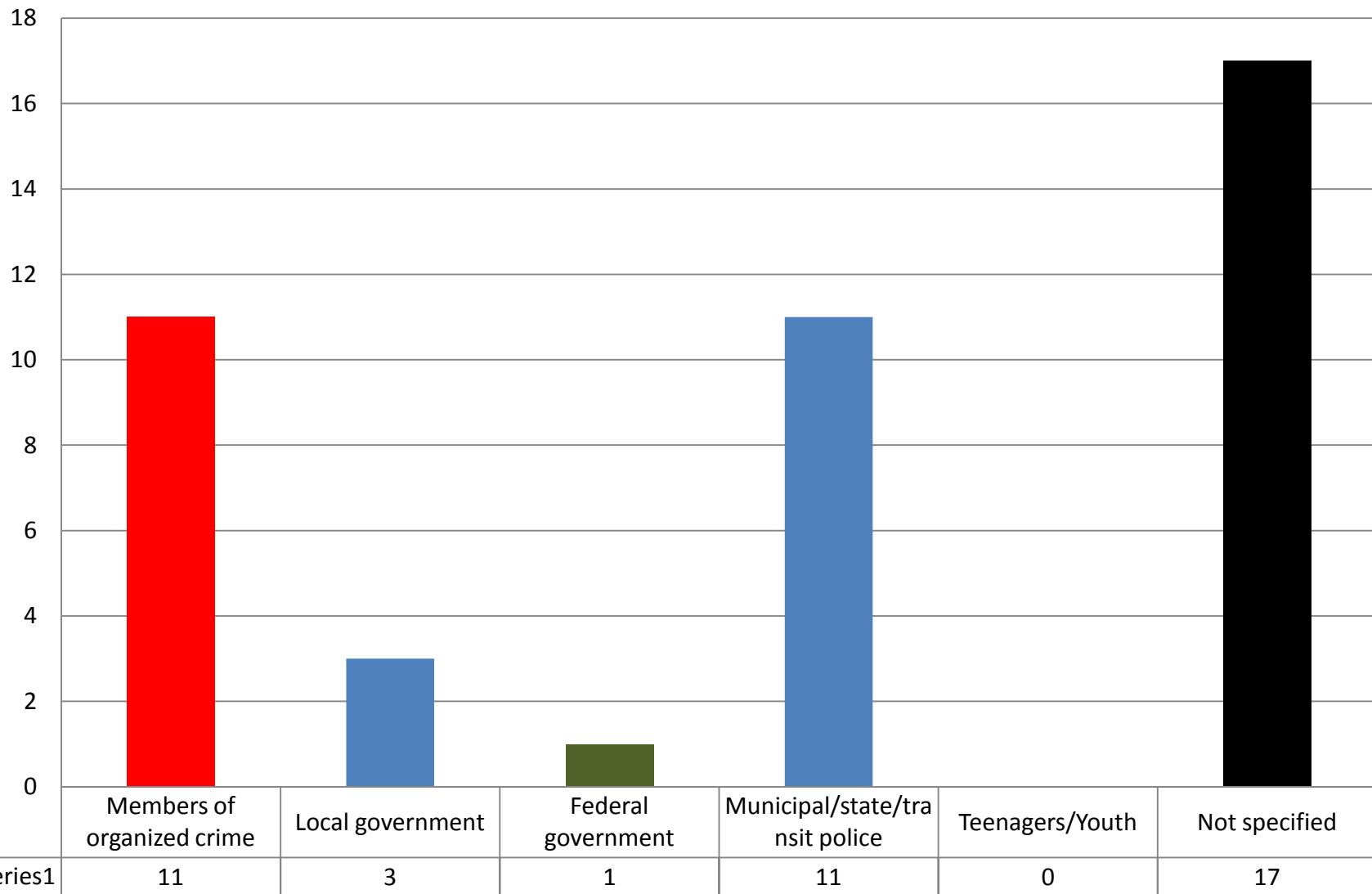


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- Sonora state is controlled by two organized crime groups, the Sinaloa Cartel and remnants of the Beltran Leyva Cartel.
- The daily *El Imparcial* provided context in news stories on organized crime. It quoted official sources who consistently identified victims as members of organized crime. However, in stories where government representatives were the victims, officials did not provide immediate information on the cause of death.
- The outlet used narco terminology to refer to specific crimes and even weapons.

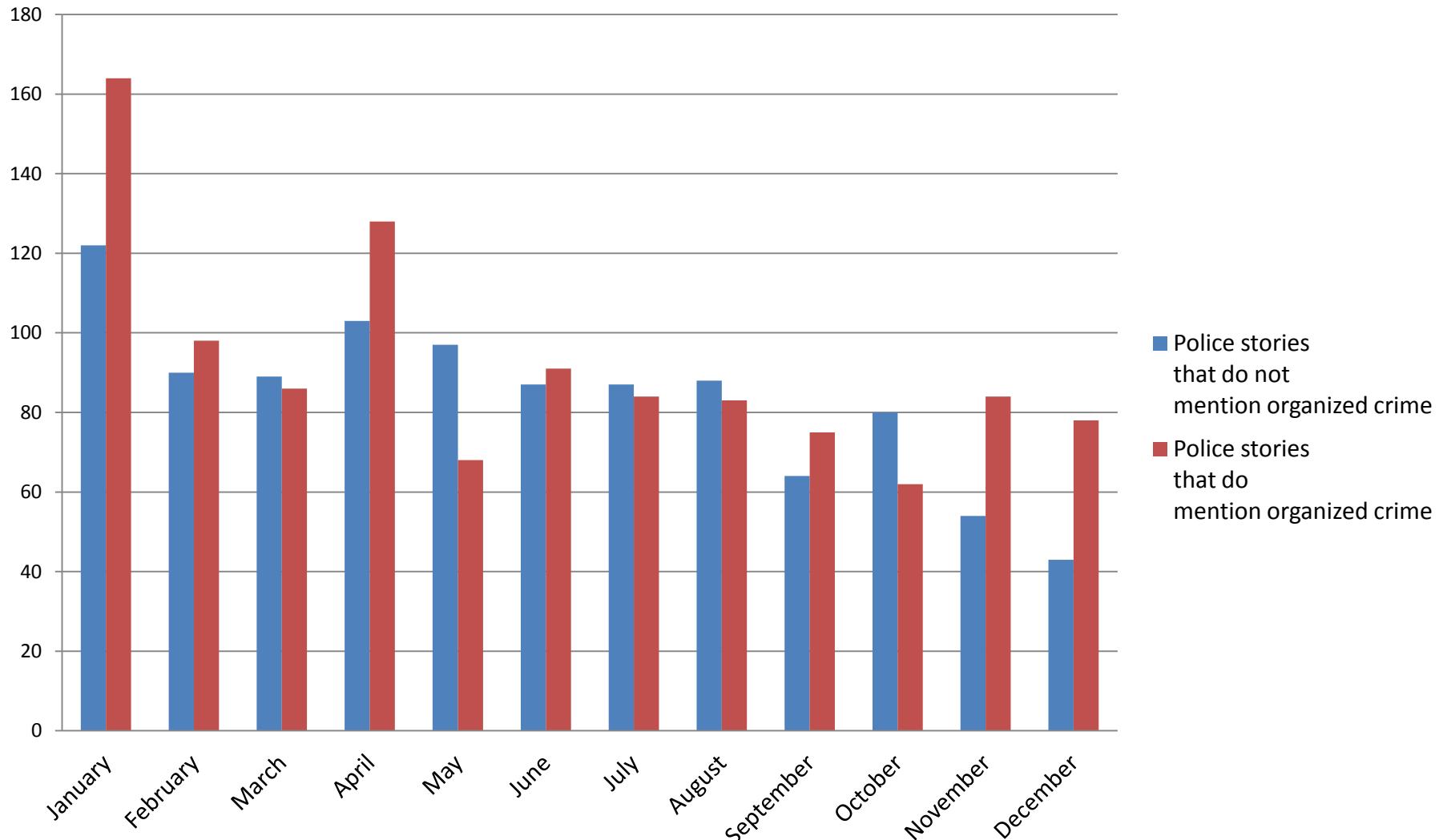


# CULIACÁN, SINALOA

*El Noroeste*

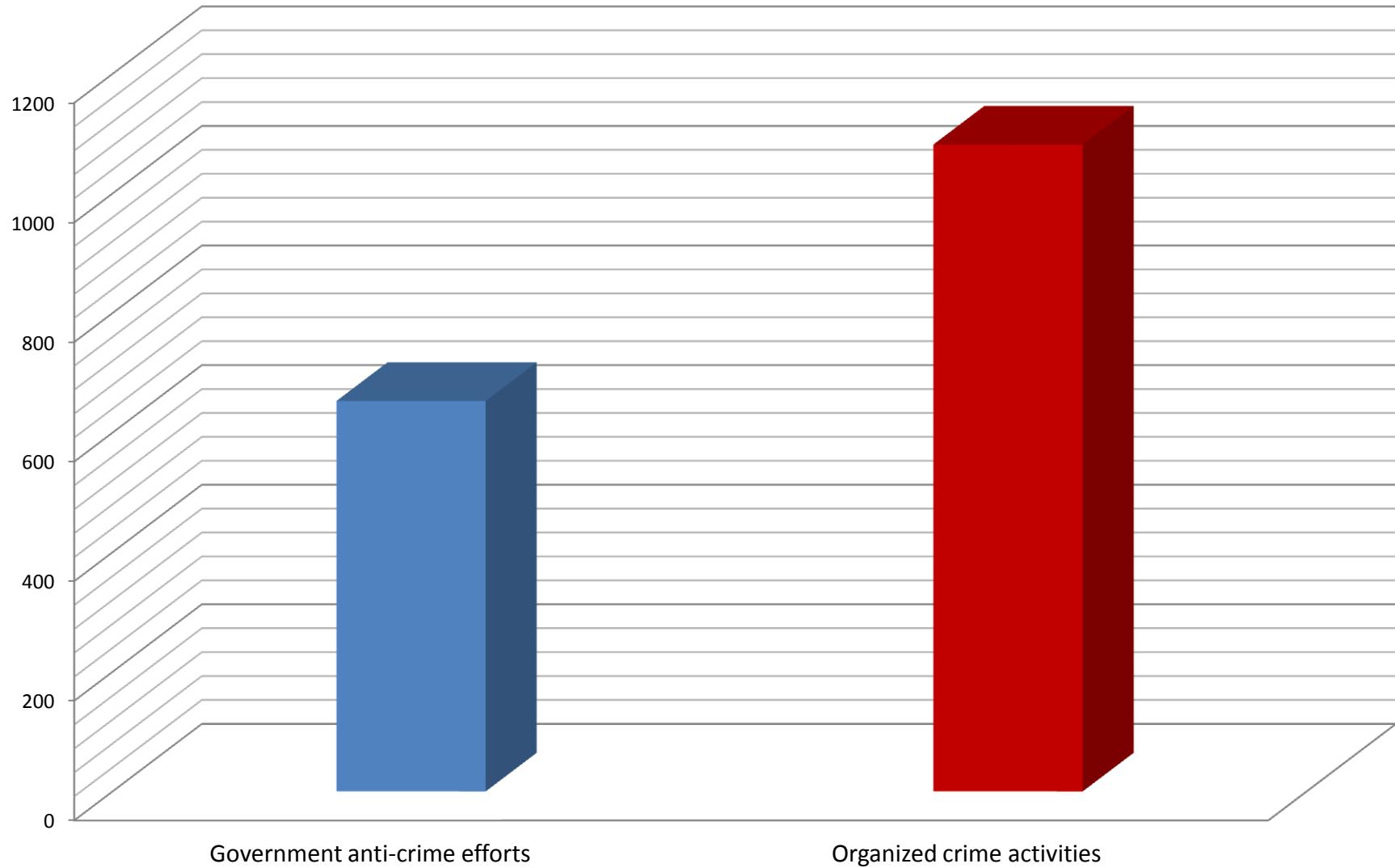


## 2011 CRIME STORIES-GENERAL ANALYSIS EL NOROESTE



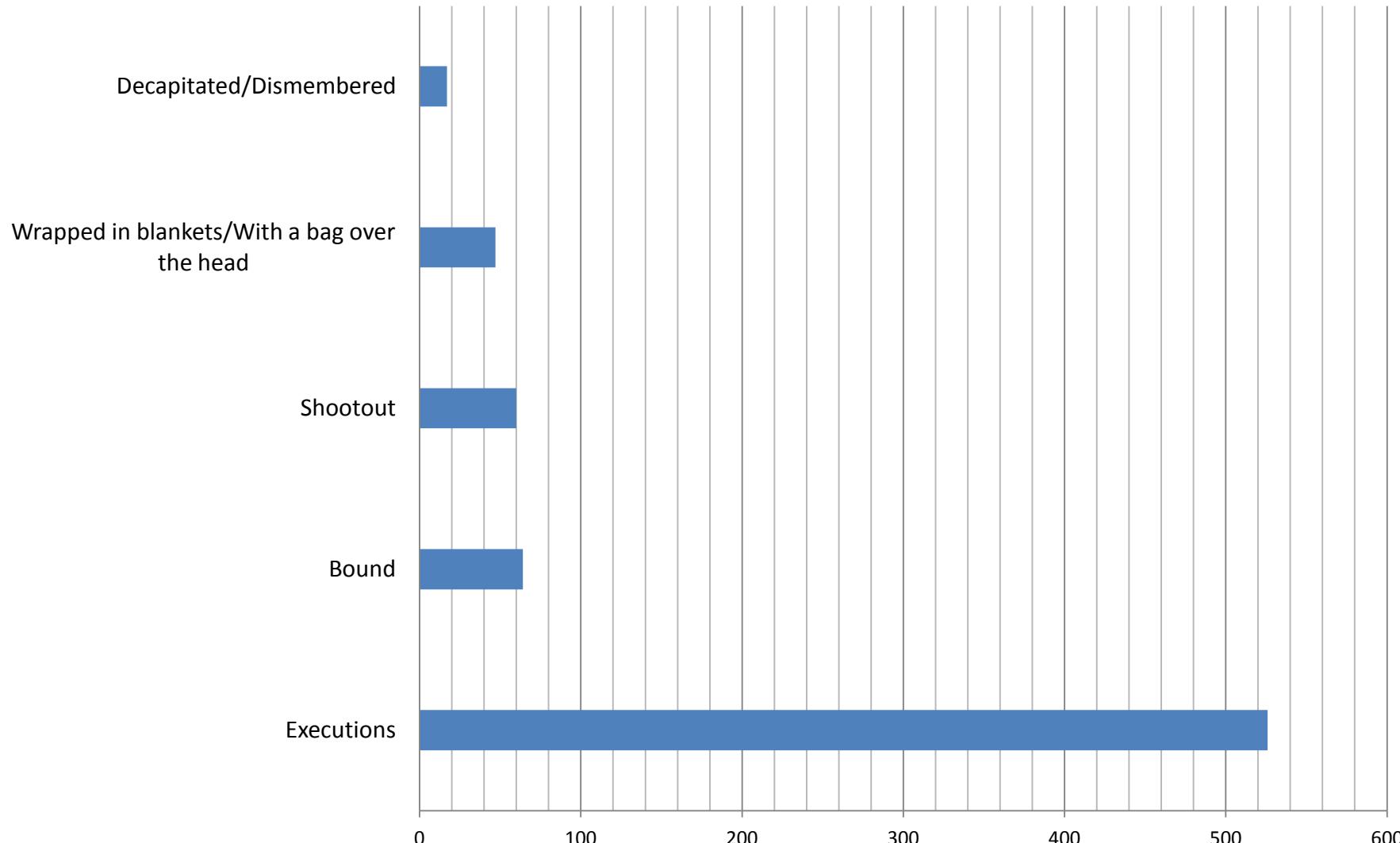


## DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE AS PORTRAYED TO READERS



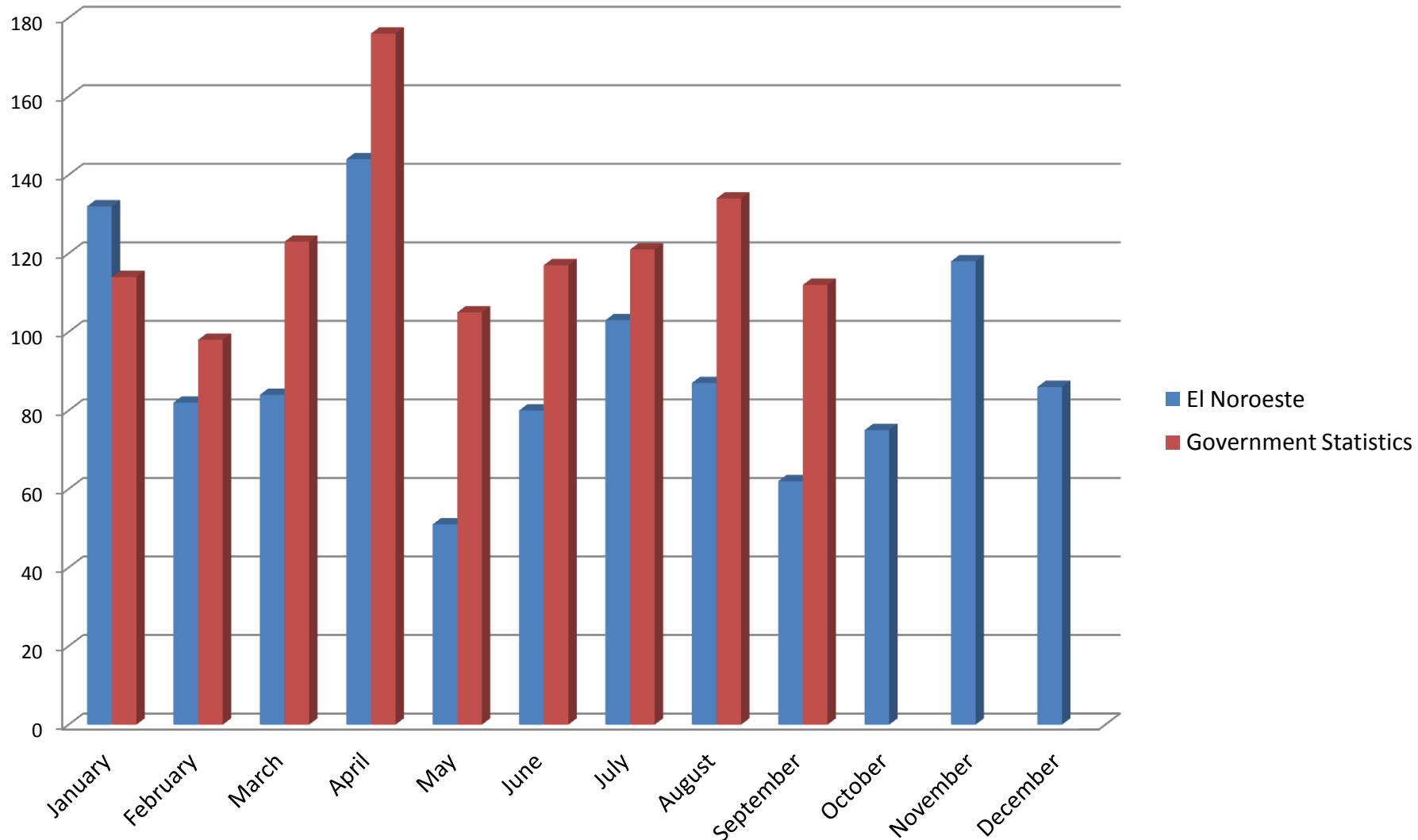


## TYPES OF CARTEL-RELATED MURDERS



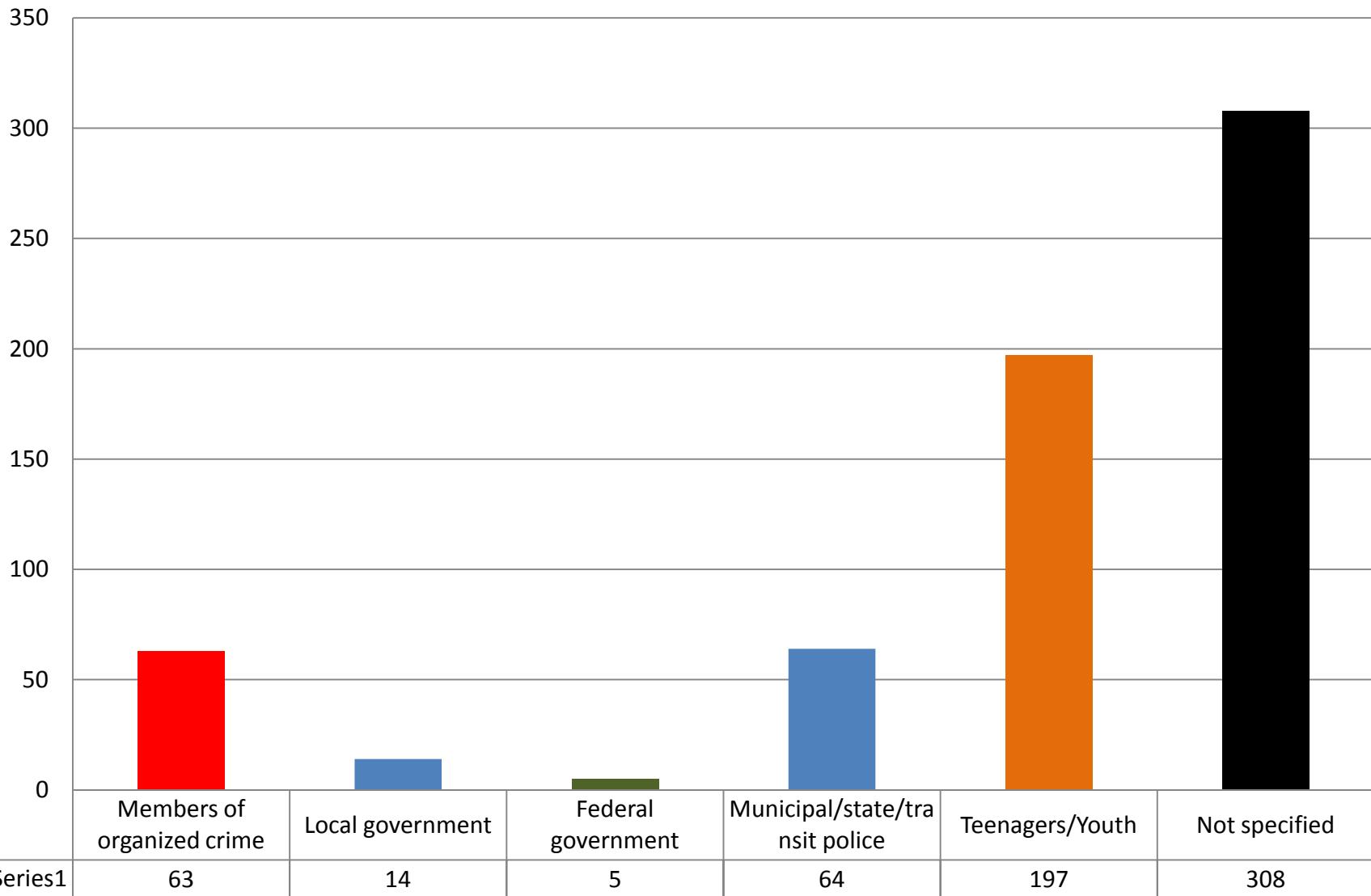


## VIOLENT HOMICIDES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME





## VIOLENT CRIME VICTIMS





## Public Safety Trends Reported by the News Outlet:

- Sinaloa, the seat of Mexico's oldest organized crime group, the Sinaloa Cartel, experienced unprecedented violence in 2011 as the Zetas tried penetrate their territory. The Zetas incursion was in response to the Sinaloa cartel's involvement in Veracruz the same year.
- The Sinaloa Cartel has controlled this region for the last 30 years. ***El Noroeste*** and other media in this state operate under a sort of *détente* with the cartel. The media knows its limits. It does not publish names of cartel leaders, nor logistics about drug operations.
- Narco messages printed by the outlet often identify the victims and give the reason as to why they were killed. The daily had access to crime scenes and official investigation documents. The daily wrote stories that warned citizens of organized crime antics. One activity they wrote on described how criminals posed as couples with children to rent residential properties that were used as stash houses, or to hide kidnap victims. Readers demanded that the daily do more investigations.